

ELT-54

Individualization and Autonomy in Language Learning

Milestones in ELT

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The British Council was established in 1934 and one of our main aims has always been to promote a wider knowledge of the English language. Over the years we have issued many important publications that have set the agenda for ELT professionals, often in partnership with other organisations and institutions.

As part of our 75th anniversary celebrations, we re-launched a selection of these publications online, and more have now been added in connection with our 80th anniversary. Many of the messages and ideas are just as relevant today as they were when first published. We believe they are also useful historical sources through which colleagues can see how our profession has developed over the years.

Individualization and Autonomy in Language Learning

This 1988 publication consists of papers presented at the 1987 SELMOUS conference in Durham for EAP practitioners. In their Introduction, the editors, Arthur Brookes and Peter Grundy, refer to the often unfulfilled promise of individualised teaching programmes, as learners lose enthusiasm once they realise how much self-directed learning and assessment are required; indeed, the collection as a whole invites scepticism regarding the efficacy of fully self-directed learning, with many contributors either explicitly or implicitly acknowledging the need for learner training of one kind or another as an accompaniment to self-directed learning. The collection begins with an overview of The ethnography of autonomy (Riley) and consideration of needs for, and options within, learner training (Allwright, Dickinson). Needs for awareness of the potential ethnocentricity of individualisation, alongside more practical needs, are considered by several contributors (Pugsley, Bloor and Bloor, Houghton et al. and Furneaux et al.), while the compilation ends with considerations of the place of individualisation and autonomy in 'bread-and-butter' areas of EAP including assessment (Blue, Lynch), self-access (St John), academic writing (Dudley-Evans) and spoken intelligibility (Hewings).

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Individualization and Autonomy in Language Learning

ELT Documents 131

**Editors: ARTHUR BROOKES and
PETER GRUNDY**



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Introduction

Individualization, Autonomy and English for Academic Purposes

Arthur Brookes and Peter Grundy

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EFL teaching in each decade is characterized to some extent by a dominant mode of thinking. The 1970s are perhaps best remembered for the interest aroused by Notional/Functional ideas. That and the growing importance of Communicative Language Teaching challenged ideas of a largely structure-based syllabus very strongly. It is too early to be sure exactly how we will look back on the 1980s. Apart from the inevitable swing back towards reinstating structural teaching in some way or other, the decade is perhaps best characterized by learner-centredness, which includes of course humanistic ideas of one sort or another. One corollary of learner-centredness is that individualization will assume greater importance, as will the recognition that the autonomy of the learner is our ultimate goal.

The exploration of the meaning of these ideas, of how acceptable they are cross-culturally and of the extent and nature of their applicability to EAP teaching attracted the interest of SELMOUS members as they planned their eighth biennial conference to be held in Durham in 1987. The interest aroused by the conference was mostly due to its central theme. This publication consists of a selection of the papers given at the conference. It moves from those papers which take a broad view of the theme of the book and ends with reports of work in particular institutions. It has not been found possible to print a record of the workshop sessions where very particular problems were looked at and solutions from different institutions shared. This is because the editors were anxious to produce a publication which could be read without reference to its origins. So we turn first to a consideration of how 'autonomy' fits in with the expected learner-teacher relationship.

It seems axiomatic that learner autonomy should be the goal of every learner and of every teacher. And yet at the same time, the understood roles of learner and teacher in many societies imply a reliance by the former on the latter. As Bruner puts it, the relation between teacher and learner is 'a relation between one who possesses something and one who does not'.

Whilst the relation between teacher and learner is clearly not *only* 'a relation between one who possesses something and one who does not', it seems safe to assume that this aspect of the relationship is of particular significance for the majority of EAP learners studying in Britain. How the individual learner reacts to this perception and the extent to which he works for or seeks to avoid a more equal relationship are questions to be considered before embarking on learning programmes centred on self-instruction.

If the learner is only vaguely aware that autonomy is his goal, then a degree of learner training seems indicated. And if part of learning to work autonomously involves *practising* working autonomously, learner training in another 'dimension' (to use Dickinson's term — see below) will also be indicated. This raises a further difficulty: to what extent will experienced learners trained in procedures that have enabled them to get to their present positions accept the need for further learner training once they arrive in the host country?

The title of this issue of *ELT Documents* is *Individualization and Autonomy in Language Learning*, with 'individualization' taking precedence over 'autonomy'. Although the majority of papers in this collection, are more directly concerned with individualization than with autonomy we have begun the introduction by speaking of learner autonomy as the underlying objective of our work in EAP. And so it might reasonably be asked why teachers who recognize the importance of learner autonomy set such store by individualization.

For the language learner, individualization has a Janus-like nature. On the one hand, individualized programmes have strong face validity and imply that the learner's needs are recognized. To that extent, they are typically welcomed by learners, and enrolment on such courses in British Universities is strong. On the other hand, individualization means much more than that learners' needs are being addressed: it also means that individual learners are working towards autonomy in ways uniquely relevant to their own needs. Individualized programmes, therefore, typically include an element of self-directed learning and self-assessment, with the consequent redefinition of tutor role, which the tutor committed to the concept of autonomy particularly welcomes. We think our colleagues in other Universities will readily acknowledge that winning learner acceptance of the implications of individualized programmes is more problematical and sometimes results in declining attendance on courses whose initial enrolment had been strong. Maggie Jo St. John's paper draws particular attention to the Janus-like quality of individualized learning programmes and of their tendency to end less promisingly than they began.

Like St. John's, many of the papers in this collection are surprisingly cautious about the efficacy of self-directed learning, perhaps for the reasons suggested in the previous paragraph. And most either explicitly or, more usually, implicitly, acknowledge the need for learner training of one kind or another as an accompaniment to self-directed learning.

The first three papers in this collection offer an overview of Individualization and Autonomy. The first asks whether learners from different cultures are equally disposed to take responsibility for their own learning; the second draws attention to the learner's innate ability to individualize even whole class instruction; and the third opens up the anatomy of learner training.

As teachers, we have all noticed how variously our different learners and groups of learners approach learning tasks. Sometimes learners with considerable proficiency in one domain perform surprisingly poorly in another. Sometimes a student with insufficient English for many everyday purposes surprises us with a striking skill in some particular area. And all too often for our own comfort, the effects of our work as teachers are reflected very differently in our various learners. We are often tempted, and with good reason, to relate these phenomena to the cultural backgrounds of our learners. Thus an EAP tutor can describe a set of learner symptoms to a colleague, who will often hazard an uncannily accurate guess at the learner's country of origin by way of a diagnosis. One temptation is to view these as weaknesses on the part of learners rather than as resulting from cultural difference.

In the opening paper, Philip Riley argues for the ethnocentricity of the principles and practices of autonomous and self-directed learning as favoured in much of Western Europe. Thus 'The Ethnography of Autonomy' is the study of the specific cultural variations in attitudes to learning, and, with our professional interests in mind, to language and language learning. Whilst we are far from being able to categorize reliably the attitudes of particular cultures to autonomous or self-directed language learning, his paper reminds us of the dangers of a blind imposition of such approaches. As the first paper in this collection, it offers the reader both a warning and a new insight into the ethnocentric nature of any view of the learning process.

Apparently by way of contrast, Dick Allwright argues that individualization of classroom experience is the norm rather than the exception. He cites research at Lancaster, which shows a remarkable degree of idiosyncrasy in what learners consider they have learnt from whole-class instruction. Although individualization and autonomous classroom behaviour may be a natural learning process, the very different uptakes from classroom instruction could also be seen as lending weight to the ethnocentricity of learning-style hypothesis. Thus the contrast with Riley's paper may be more apparent than real.

The transcript of part of a language lesson appended to Allwright's paper repays careful study along the suggested lines. So much goes on in the lesson which is unplanned by the teacher and which he has a degree of difficulty in handling. Most of us will recognize this phenomenon of the lesson somehow escaping from our control. And yet this feeling that the lesson is being hi-jacked right under our noses, and which we sometimes perceive as a failure in ourselves as teachers, may well be evidence of learner individualization of our instruction even in a whole-class context.

Allwright sees the possibility of learner training based on developing the autonomous strategies that are manifested in this way in whole-class instruction.

EAP teachers have long recognized the importance of learner training. Some EAP teachers would go so far as to claim that EAP is principally a matter of learner training in an appropriate set of study skills. The danger of this approach is that learner training is then seen as desired-end-product related rather than as learner-starting-point related. It is this recognition of the importance of the learner in considerations of individualization and autonomy that characterize this set of papers. Thus learner training is much more than simply rehearsing study skills. It is indeed something quite other than this immediately recognizable stock-in-trade of the EAP teacher. It has to do with preparing the learner to work autonomously, to be, in effect, his own teacher.

In an interim report on a current research project presented at the SELMOUS Conference, Joanna Channell drew the attention of the Conference to a particular informant who had written:

The most important point from studying at Universities is that I must learn by myself, no more teach by the teacher.

Yet even this recognition cannot be achieved without a degree of learner training.

In his paper 'Learner Training', Leslie Dickinson recognizes two 'scales' of self-instruction, that perceived by the teacher and that experienced by the learner. This is obviously a useful division. The areas treated in many of the later papers in this collection typically fall within the 'scale' of self-instruction as perceived by the teacher, whilst Allwright's paper describes one form of learner initiated self-instruction in some detail.

Dickinson suggests a three-dimensional model for identifying objectives for learner training:

Intended Learning Mode
Learning Focus
Planning (or Strategic) Level

The Planning (or Strategic) level dimension is further divided thus:

Planning Level  Approach to Learning
Learning Plans
Learning Techniques

It may be helpful to read the nine papers that follow against the background of Dickinson's schema, and perhaps to consider whether the various authors' interests are equally spread across the three dimensions and their various sub-sections, or whether we haven't perhaps polarized our views of learner training too much around Learning Plans.

It would, after all, be strange if our perception of the need for learner training in self-instruction were not also ethnocentric.

We have been examining some of the theoretical reasons for emphasizing the importance of individualization and autonomy in language teaching, but changes in emphasis in language teaching are not necessarily entirely the product of fresh theories. They may also arise from practical constraints and opportunities. The greater emphasis on individualization in mother tongue teaching in Britain, for instance, was accelerated by the move towards comprehensive schooling and within this by the greater emphasis on mixed ability teaching. In the same way, practicalities have forced many British institutions teaching English as a Foreign Language pre-sessionally to place more and more stress on individualization. This is very carefully and painstakingly demonstrated in Jenny Pugsley's contribution to this volume.

She reports that an overseas study fellow coming to Britain is carefully placed by the British Council in the most suitable institution. This attempt at individualization in the placing of students is to a degree constrained by a number of conflicting criteria, including cost-effectiveness, the provision of suitable living conditions, and the desirability of studying on a pre-sessional course at the institution where the learner will later study. Furthermore, the language backgrounds of the students may be markedly different. There is likely to be a special problem with learners who speak and write fluently using a locally acceptable form of English which differs markedly from the standard. It seems that even the notion 'English' may be ethnocentrically defined. Ideally, it would be useful to send students to institutions which specialize in tackling this problem imaginatively, but, as we have mentioned, there are many other constraints.

With all the constraints under which the British Council operates in placing study fellows, there is only limited opportunity for the study fellows themselves to choose the institution for studying in, but once in that institution it is worth remembering 'that study fellows are frequently quite articulate about their own language problems and are perhaps better aware than their tutors of the learning process that spans numerous activities and sub-skills'. At the same time, tutors are better informed than learners about the type and standard of English required by the institution. This suggests that the best way forward appears to be through negotiation, and it is this area that we consider next.

One of the central concerns of educational institutions is how to plan the best kind of syllabus, whether this is done with or without negotiating with the learner. If the necessity for some kind of syllabus is taken as a starting-point, then clearly our concern with individualization and autonomy will lead us to consider the best kind of EAP syllabus for each student and the best method of determining the syllabus.

Meriel and Tom Bloor consider how these desiderata might be translated into practice within a typical British University, first from a theoretical point of view and then as a report on their experience in two different institutions. In applying first principles to the practicalities of planning a teaching programme in such an institution negotiation is

important. Negotiation (in its more liberal meaning of 'discussions leading towards agreement about how best to reach a shared objective') is not just an unfortunate necessity. It has also important advantages in developing the perceptions both of the tutor and the learner(s), and in helping both to an awareness of the cultural variations of which Riley writes. Thus syllabus negotiation is a major way of extending the awareness of learners as to what is important and worth learning. This type of syllabus negotiation is important not only when deciding on self-access programmes, where there is often a strong element of teacher-perceived learner training, but more particularly in determining what whole-class programme best suits individual learners, especially when the syllabus is treated as an inventory of 'objectives'.

The Bloors' paper also deals with the negotiating of methodologies — an area of particular interest in EAP, where ethnocentric perceptions inevitably come to the surface and are often not sufficiently resolved through discussion, negotiation, and experimentation.

Given the structures and materials provided by the institution (either with or without negotiation), how should an individual learner find his/her own best path through this? Every learner has a unique way of learning, which may or may not be consciously chosen (see Allwright and Dickinson, this volume); but this path may well be improved, extended, and modified in discussion with others — especially with peers with the same interests. Negotiation and learner training seem to come together in this important area.

There is, of course, a paradox about individualization and autonomy — the more skilful the tutor, the more autonomous the learner will become. The uncomfortable nature of this paradox for many teachers is particularly apparent in Allwright's data — as previously noted. How then is tutor role affected by individualization? Is it only learner training that is required or do tutors too need to make accommodations? And how does the role of a tutor alter with the learner's changing perception of the relationship? These questions are implicit in the paper of Diane Houghton et al.

Clearly, some learners are more naturally dependent than others (as we can see in Houghton's case study) but the expert tutor can help even the dependent learner become more autonomous. The tutor skills necessary for this result to be achieved will vary considerably according to the situation and are not all in the area of learner training. For instance, the skills of setting up a self-study or self-access scheme and of administering it will certainly include managerial and organizational skills, including the ability to make key materials. Chris Long's packaged writing course, for instance, being determined by financial constraints, demands a fool-proof, generally-usable package of material for a large number of small groups. In this scheme there is no attempt to provide a variety of tasks to suit individual learners, but autonomy is developed by learners in small groups co-operating with each other rather than becoming dependent on the teacher.

One-to-one teaching is a more usual form of individualization and this is often used when helping remedially (as reported by Paul Fanning) or when helping with thesis writing (as reported later in this volume by Tony Dudley-Evans). In this situation it is important to make the most of the opportunity of working one-to-one but at the same time to avoid dependence on the part of the learner.

The language tutor is often in the position of having to be a counsellor as well as a language teacher, and skill in this role is especially important, as Houghton demonstrates.

It seems therefore, that if we need to train learners to work autonomously and individually (as Dickinson says we should do), then this requires particular skills of tutors and has implications for their training too. These skills are almost certainly more varied and greater in number than is generally recognized.

This need for tutor training/awareness seems to be confirmed by the interim findings of Channell's research project on *The Learning Experiences of Overseas Students at the Universities of Nottingham and Loughborough*, which was referred to earlier. Indeed this project takes as a starting point the position that the role of the student is no longer a dependent one and that accommodation needs to come from both student *and institution*. The project is thus in a sense looking into the extent to which a 'joint culture' is being created (see the final paragraphs of Riley's paper). After reading Riley's paper, our heightened recognition of the ethnocentric nature of our perspectives on learning procedures will perhaps assist our accommodation as tutors.

It is typical of the time and place we live in that awareness such as that referred to in the previous paragraph should be seen as a preliminary to effective action in so many areas. The case has recently been put for greater learner awareness of various kinds of learning strategy — for example, of communicative strategies in language learning (see Faerch and Kasper, 1983) and in the area of metacognition (see Dickinson, this volume). It would seem similarly important for both learners and teachers to recognize the ethnocentric nature of learning processes in a more conscious way.

Because we encounter learners first as other human beings and as representatives of a culture, and only second as a special kind of receptive classroom furniture, it seems logical to proceed towards accommodation from an understanding of the values and conceptualizations held by each party in the teacher-learner relation.

In 'Making Friends and Influencing Tutors', Furneaux et al set out to describe an EAP project designed to promote just such an awareness of cultural variation between country of origin and host country. Although the declared purpose of this project is to enable students to perceive that cultural norms are relative and that accommodation, when desirable, is achievable, the project is also notable for the sensitive attitude of the authors to their students' home culture. By learning alongside their learners in this way, Furneaux et al offer a stimulating model of

simultaneous teaching/learning by both 'tutors' and 'students' which seems to recognize the ethnocentricity of a society's procedures. By way of a bonus, their paper also describes three interesting classroom uses of video materials.

Because of the nature of the needs of the learners with whom they were working, the main body of Furneaux et al's work is within general areas of acculturation, with acculturation within the academic context mentioned only relatively briefly (although in the significant context of student awareness of supervisor expectation).

George Blue's paper on self-assessment is written more from a tutor's perspective. He sets out to discover how closely tutor assessment and learner self-assessment correlate. His purpose is less to help students understand criteria for tutor-determined assessment than to discover whether learner self-assessment can replace tutor assessment in an institutional context. He thus holds out the tempting prospect that the learner might become truly autonomous, and, in one necessary aspect of institutionalized language learning, actually replace the tutor. His extremely provoking conclusions suggest that (a) there is a significant degree of correlation between learner- and tutor-held beliefs about proficiency in the four skill areas, and (b) that particular cultural groups consistently over- and under-estimate their own abilities. But despite these conclusions, like many of the other authors in this collection, he stops some way short of denying that the tutor has a necessary role.

Blue also argues that self-monitoring rather than end-of-course self-assessment may be the most valuable form of self-assessment, a point taken up by Peter Grundy in a workshop session at the Selma Conference. In this session, members of the Conference tried out exercises that combined language learning with learner self-monitoring of communicative skill and degree of acculturation. Indeed, an obvious goal of our work would be for learner training in self-instruction and autonomous learning techniques on the one hand, and the acquisition of new knowledge and skills on the other, to occur simultaneously and in such a way as not to be differentiable.

In a comparable way, Tony Lynch's paper, 'Peer Evaluation in Practice', simultaneously teaches a new language skill and the metacognitive awareness to learn it successfully. And with Blue's paper in mind, it should also be seen as a significant move towards reaching a tutor/learner as well as a presenter/audience agreed assessment of learner performance.

Its strengths lie in its use of *authentic* metrics of assessment and in its drawing to the attention of the learners their responsibilities not only as speakers/presenters but also as listeners/assessors.

Lynch's paper makes a natural bridge between the earlier papers that fall strongly under the influence of the ethnocentric hypothesis of Riley and the later papers that detail practical aspects of self-directed instruction.

The first such practical area to be considered is the open access system. The task of selecting, making and grading specific materials, setting up

and servicing such a system, and assessing the usefulness of the materials is of immediate interest to most tutors actively involved in individualized teaching. Examples of how this is done in any one institution can rarely be exactly replicated in another as the range of materials and user requirements are considerable and typically vary between one institution and another. Nevertheless particular practices can often be adapted or may generate further ideas. An example at the Selmous Conference in Durham in 1987 was the report by Hilary Nesi and John Skelton of the way in which videotapes of learners' oral presentations were put on self-access for further analysis and as a guide to the making of further videotapes. The use of unedited videotapes in this way provoked a good deal of discussion, possibly because it is one of the less well-tried forms of authentic, learner-generated, self-access material.

Audio-tapes for home or language laboratory/listening booth use are, perhaps surprisingly, commoner than videotapes even today. Because careful listening and controlled speaking practice, often with emphasis on pronunciation, work well in self-study mode, and because the technology and accompanying software is increasingly available worldwide in standardized forms, this aspect of self-access is usually particularly popular with learners. In terms of quantity and variety, however, the commonest material is written, and usually aims to develop different types of reading skills, or grammatical awareness, or writing skills of various kinds — very often with a study skills element. Because self-access systems are so closely related to individualization, the proper evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses and of the attitudes of their learners towards them is important. It is here that Maggie Jo St. John's contribution is particularly helpful, with its interesting range of learner-determined evaluative responses both to the tasks involved and to the study mode itself. These suggest the possibility of real involvement of tutors and students in on-going revision of self-access resources and in deciding the extent of their usefulness in any given context.

Perhaps the most important single practical task facing most overseas post-graduate students is the completion of a thesis or other extended piece of writing. Since the form that this must take is to a considerable degree ethnocentrically determined, the language tutor is often turned to as a ready source of help in this highly individualized work. The problem from the tutor's perspective is to avoid being merely a proof-reader to the detriment of the autonomous work of the student in this area, whilst at the same time taking care not to move too far into the content side of the work, which is best left to the subject supervisor. This type of dilemma is at its sharpest when the institution makes it possible for the language tutor to work on a one-to-one basis with the writer of the thesis, as in the context described by Tony Dudley-Evans.

Philip Shaw, in a contribution to the 1987 Selmous Conference in Durham, started from a different perspective, and analysed ways in which thesis-writers could help themselves by discussion with others, sharing work in progress, and making proper use of existing material. Both he

and Dudley-Evans, considered that the rhetoric or ethnocentricity of the genre was particularly important and that the introduction and the discussion of results were most troublesome within any data-based thesis.

Clearly the organization of a piece of academic writing is crucial. Help in this area is important for all students, particularly because there is often a cultural element to the way academic writing is organized as Dudley-Evans argues (and see Brookes & Grundy, 1988). Moreover, learners need to be trained to see how to make the most appropriate use of their EAP tutors in this context. Dudley-Evans argues that even the way the contact is arranged in the first place has a role to play in learner training.

The final paper unlike that of Dudley-Evans is concerned with one of the skills in Spoken English — individualizing pronunciation improvement. As Martin Hewings reminds us, this is an area of the utmost concern to the learner, but has become something of a Cinderella of EAP teaching at the tertiary level. Certainly, one rather neglected element in the development of speaking skills is intelligibility (and hence acceptability) in pronunciation. At the 1987 Selmsou conference in Durham, Arthur Brookes ran a workshop in which tapes of students discussing their spoken English problems were played. Workshop participants were then asked to list problems particularly of intelligibility. Very often the chief causes of unintelligibility were poor phrasing, wrong stress, and faulty intonation. Discussion centred on ways of individualizing work in this area relying entirely on speaking rather than reading aloud. Hewings takes a complementary position, showing how faulty pronunciation of segments and word-stress can be identified and worked on in an individual basis using passages read aloud when necessary.

As editors we were anxious to conclude this volume with examples of individualized language teaching applied to two different language skills. Indeed, we have tried to order these papers so as to start with an overview of 'The Ethnography of Autonomy' and the consequent need for and options within learner training (Riley, Allwright, Dickson) and to conclude with a consideration of the place of individualization and autonomy in such bread-and-butter areas of EAP as assessment (Blue, Lynch), self-access (St. John), academic writing (Dudley-Evans) and spoken intelligibility (Hewings). Along the way, we have considered the need for not only student but also institutional and tutor awareness of the ethnocentricity of individualization and the problems it gives rise to (Pugsley, Bloor & Bloor, Houghton et al, Furneaux et al).

By way of conclusion, it may be interesting to try to list recurring themes within this set of a dozen papers. Such recurring themes would certainly include seeing the need for learner autonomy as tutor-driven, acknowledging the importance of learner and perhaps tutor training (and, as a preliminary to that, of sensitization and awareness raising generally), a concern for the learner above the learning task, and reservations as

to the extent to which individualization and autonomy are appropriate or practical in an EAP context. How ethnocentric we must have been!

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The Ethnography of Autonomy

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Introduction

In the year 1899, the great archeologist Sir Arthur Evans succeeded at last in purchasing from the provisional Greek government part of the site of Knossos on the Isle of Crete. In the years that followed, the excavations that he carried out there literally changed history, revealing as they did a hitherto completely unknown bronze age culture which had art and architecture of the highest order. Evans called this civilization 'Minoan', after the legendary Cretan king, and he was able to demonstrate that Minoan civilization was to some considerable degree parental of Mycenaean Greek culture.

Not surprisingly Evans's work aroused world-wide interest, as he revealed a succession of fascinating discoveries and even greater mysteries. Snake goddesses, stirrup vases, the great Hall of Processions, tombs, tablets written in Linear A and Linear B were all excavated from the Palace of Minos and reported back in long, prominent articles in *The Times*. Then there came a pause. It was known that Evans had recently found a whole new labyrinth of rooms and corridors bordering on what had been identified as the religious quarter. One of these new chambers, it was rumoured, was of particular interest because although bare and rectangular, it had an indefinable ambiance, a numinous quality that seemed to pulse from the well-springs of the human psyche, from the sacred myths of bull and sacrificial maiden. At last, Evans made his announcement to a waiting world. He had found . . . he had found the oldest known primary school classroom!

It is now generally agreed by the experts that Evans got it all wrong, that the chamber in question was nothing of the kind. That, however, is not the point I want to make (and even if it was, Evans's reputation is solid enough to withstand such pin-pricks). No, the point I want to make is that he got it wrong in such a spectacularly ethnocentric way. The three constitutive elements in the expression 'primary school classroom' between them refer to a social reality, a pedagogical structure and practice, that is nineteenth century industrial English, not prehistoric Mediterranean. What Evans found and what he saw were two very different things.

In fact, far from wanting to laugh at Evans, what I wish to do in this paper is to examine the question of whether those of us working in language teaching and learning in general and self-direction in particular are not guilty of exactly the same error, of trying to impose our own views on other, foreign realities. This anxiety — and it is something that worries me — can be made more explicit by asking two closely-related questions:

- Are the principles and practice on which ‘autonomous’ and ‘self-directed’ learning schemes are based *ethnocentric*?
- Are there any ethnic or social groups whose cultural background predisposes them for or against such approaches?

Two sources of anxiety

Now, when I say that I am worried about these matters, I am not referring to some vague, metaphysical *angst*. There are genuine, practical reasons for anxiety, reasons which are directly related to the life and work of the language Centre where I work, the CRAPEL. I also suspect that they are related to the life and work of most other people involved in autonomous and self-directed learning schemes, which I hope justifies the rather subjective and programmatic nature of what follows.

The primary source of my anxiety are simply personal experience: over the last six or seven years, the CRAPEL has moved from a situation where we were mainly providers of English to French speakers to one where we spend a considerable proportion of our time working with foreigners wishing to learn French. This has brought us into contact with learners from a very wide range of cultures indeed and for a language centre that practises action-research as we do, that automatically means that we have set up various projects to look into different aspects of cross-cultural communication.

Amongst the groups we have been responsible for there have been Americans, Indonesians, British, Turks, Lebanese, Syrians, Danes, Algerians, Moroccans, South Americans and Vietnamese. Naturally, we have tried to adapt our approach to their specific needs but *mutatis mutandis*, we have also tried to continue to respect certain didactic principles to which we are attached, including, of course, the idea of encouraging learner autonomy.

Now while it is certainly true that in every group there are *individuals* who are in varying degrees for or against self-direction, it is equally a matter of experience that there are *groups* who are more or less in favour. I would like to give a personal example, though I am sure it is one many readers could confirm ten times over. In the last two years, I have been involved in organizing almost identical study activities for learners from four different national groups: Danes, Americans, Moroccans and Vietnamese. The activity involved developing a questionnaire on some aspect of the French way of life and then interviews at home, in the office, etc.

The Danes took to the activity like ducks to water: in fact, they made it quite clear both at the time and in their final reports that my careful explanation and introduction were really quite superfluous. As for my attempts to justify the activity and its objectives, they obviously thought I was a bit fuddy-duddy, though they were terribly nice about it. They had no problems in sorting themselves out into sub-groups. They were very demanding in material terms, but asked for almost nothing in the way of methodological help or advice. Nor was any necessary: they turned up for the final evaluation and pooling with all their tasks satisfactorily completed.

The Americans, to my surprise — and I realize that I am revealing my own stereotypes here — though they declared themselves and indeed proved to be in favour of this kind of work, requested far more help and explanation and guidance. They also seemed to have more difficulty getting themselves organized and in understanding the overall purpose of the exercise.

The Moroccans listened politely and agreed with everything I said, in theory. Indeed, during the preliminary discussions, they made it clear that they thought I was the most innovatory pedagogue since Comenius. However, when it came to getting down to brass tacks, all this changed: they dug their heels in over every last detail. Endless time was wasted re-explaining and re-justifying what I thought had been understood and accepted in theory. They protested vociferously, after this had gone on for some time, that the quantity of work was far too great for the time available (which, by then, it was!) and that anyway, since it would be absolutely impossible for them to do similar work back home, it was pointless for them as teachers. Interesting, but pointless. Moreover, their opposition to the project seemed to be about the only thing any of them had in common, as they proved quite incapable of organizing themselves into groups. Time after time individuals came back asking to be put into a group by a teacher.

The Vietnamese said nothing and did nothing. From the start, it was clear that they just didn't want to know, that the work simply was not to their taste. Moreover, they had the greatest difficulty understanding the nature and objectives of the activity. The whole group would go into a huddle at the drop of a hat: afterwards, they would put questions which indicated real unhappiness about the whole business.

I hope to return to the topic of these groups and to talk about the problems they pose in a more analytic way. For the moment, you will remember, I was just describing my personal experience as a teacher-helper in a rather impressionistic manner, trying to justify and describe my first source of anxiety as regards self-direction.

I would now like to turn to my second source of anxiety, my second reason for feeling that, in spite of all our efforts, there might be something

ethnocentric about our approach. To put it simply — it has happened before. I am not just talking about, say, biased textbooks. I am referring to serious, informed attempts to tackle problems related to language and learning in a cross-cultural context. In fact, as I hope to show, this difficulty is common to all the social sciences which have a contrastive or comparative dimension. Here are examples:

The first of my examples will probably already be familiar to many of you. It concerns attempts by a number of teachers and linguists to develop rhetorical models which would be of use to foreign learners in the acquisition of written expression. In my own case, such a learner would typically be a North African or a Burkinabe preparing a dissertation of some kind in French, a language which he or she probably speaks and writes fluently, but who does not have perfect mastery of the norms of overall rhetorical structure.

As you know, any number of 'skeleton structures' or 'model plans' have been proposed over the years to help such students become aware of the nature of the problem, to relativize their own cultural requirements and to guide their second-language productions. One of the best-known of these, and certainly one of the first and most influential was that of Kaplan in his *Anatomy of Rhetoric* (1972), but what I have to say applies to most subsequent handbooks on style, most of which are aimed at university students and post-graduates working on their own; my point concerns the conventions used to diagram and compare the rhetorical structures preferred in different cultures. Kaplan proposes the following:



Not only is the use of the diagram itself a highly-charged convention — even students from sophisticated literate cultures can have great trouble with them — but the separate diagrams clearly take as their common point of reference Western norms, exemplified here by the straight line going directly from start to finish. Other rhetorical traditions are invariably shown including loops, spirals or recursions, the implications of which are usually reinforced by statements such as 'The traditional Japanese essay structure includes a central section which is only vaguely related to the subject.' In this way, the Japanese use of metaphor and allusion to enlighten indirectly but profoundly and at the same time to avoid the unpleasantness of direct confrontation or debate is seen as merely an inability to stick to the subject.

Recently, I showed this diagram to a group of about thirty postgraduate students preparing a Master's degree in French as a Foreign Language. However, I removed the labels and asked them to choose the one they thought was French and the one they thought was English. Their replies

were almost unanimous: French was the straight arrow — and English the spiral.

My second example of inbuilt ethnocentrism in the social sciences is taken from the field of psychiatry. It is a quotation from Maurice Lipsedge, who is a consultant psychiatrist at Guy's Hospital Medical School in London. He was reviewing Philip Rack's book *Race, Culture and Mental Disorder* (1983).

A young Hungarian Jew, a member of the ultra-orthodox Hasidic sect, was brought by his anxious mother to an East End hospital where I was working. She was concerned that he was fasting excessively and spending long hours immersed in the ritual bath. She felt that his excessive self-mortification was a sign of insanity. The patient was interviewed by a woman doctor, who extended her hand in a friendly greeting. The Hasid withdrew his hand; the physician recorded 'catatonic negativism', unaware of the taboo on physical contact with women, who might be defiled by menstrual blood. When taken to the ward the patient covered his ears to keep out the 'lewd' sound of a woman singer on the radio. The doctor noted: 'typical schizophrenic posturing'.

A few months ago a Nigerian walked into another local hospital with his baby son and asked for a priest to bless him to 'get rid of a spell'. The hospital chaplain was not consulted. Instead the duty psychiatric house officer was called, who diagnosed 'paranoid delusions'. The Nigerian was detained on a compulsory hospital order. A social worker was called to remove the child to a place of safety. The 'patient' objected, there was a struggle, the police were called in and the man was removed to a locked ward, sedated with neuroleptics and labelled 'paranoid schizophrenic'.

This type of grave diagnostic error has been a common occurrence in psychiatric practice in Britain. . .

My third example of ethnocentrism in the social sciences is taken from the field of linguistic pragmatics. It concerns the set of 'conversational maxims' put forward by the philosopher, Paul Grice (1975). Clearly, if we could establish a set of principles for the selection, realization and interpretation of utterances in context that had pancultural validity, it would represent a major advance in our understanding of the mechanisms of communication at all levels. Working within a general 'Cooperative Principle', Grice posits four maxims which speakers and hearers apply in the collaborative construction of discourse. These are:

- Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required.
- Quality: Do not say what you believe is false or that for which you have no evidence.
- Relation: Be relevant . . .
- Manner: Be perspicuous: avoid obscurity and ambiguity. Be brief, be orderly.

Grice and a number of other philosophers and pragmaticians have shown these seemingly simple maxims to be powerful tools for the analysis of conversational implicature (see Levinson 1983 for detailed exemplification and discussion), so much so that for something like a

decade they have been treated as if they were universal principles. However, recent work has proved this not to be the case: in Sue George's words, they are just the 'local aspirations of middle-class American intellectuals'. (George, 1984.)

This work has been conducted in two different fields: pragmatics and the ethnography of communication. In pragmatics, Sperber and Wilson have demonstrated that it is possible to promote the maxim of Relation to a Principle of Relevance dropping the maxims concerning sincerity, clarity and quantitative appropriateness — without any loss of explanatory power. Meanwhile, evidence from ethnographers has been mounting up to show that in a number of different cultures The Principle of Cooperation and the maxims of sincerity, clarity and quantity do not apply. The widespread phenomenon of the secret name should have been warning enough not to mention euphemism, taboos and humour. Then there are those societies where truth or sincerity varies according to social status or to the chronological position of the utterance in the interaction as a whole. An example of the first would apparently be Thailand, where a question of the sort, 'Is this the way to the railway station?', if addressed by a superior to an inferior, will always receive an affirmative answer, regardless of the actual facts of the matter. An example of the second would be buying a shirt in Malta: 'Have you got a red shirt?' asked outside the shop and at the beginning of the exchange will receive the answer 'yes', because it is seen as merely the opening of the bargaining negotiation. Once inside the shop and after a certain time, the same question may receive a factual 'no' as a reply. Again, I was in Italy last year establishing a sound library at the University of Siena: I had the rather pleasant (and unfortunately rare) task of going to a stockist to order considerable quantities of equipment. I was rather put out to discover that the manager did not seem actually to want to sell me anything — in fact, the only topic he did seem to want to discuss was the relative merits of Arsenal and Everton. Every now and again, I managed to drag some technical information out of him and even place the odd order, but he was soon back to Everton and Arsenal. After an hour of this, I had had enough, so I asked the university teacher I was working with what on earth the man was playing at and why couldn't I get down to business? The reply was that I *was* doing business and that given the size of the order, the manager was giving me literally all his time, as a sign of respect. Respect for me it may have been, but not for Grice's maxims.

So far, then, I have voiced two anxieties: the first was that the ideas and practice of self-direction, autonomy and learner-centredness might be ethnocentric. The second was that there might be cultures which are somehow more or less suitable or favourable to these ideas and practices; I then went on to show that these anxieties are not without foundation, either in terms of our daily professional experience or in terms of social scientific discussion and research.

However, I am very much aware that I have been talking in a rather

general way. So what I would like to do now is to home in on the central idea of cultural variation in attitudes to learning.

Cultural variation in attitudes to learning

It is this field that I have labelled — not *too* pretentiously I hope — *the ethnography of autonomy*. This is obviously not the right moment for a detailed discussion of what is meant by the term ‘ethnography’, but we do need some kind of gloss or rule-of-thumb definition. So let us just say that where anthropology sets out to account for the variability of human cultures, to describe and explain human nature, ethnography sets out to describe and explain what it means to be a member of a particular culture, to be Danish or Moroccan or French or Vietnamese. There is some truth, then, in the idea that the two disciplines are in a relationship that could be summarized as:

Anthropology: general, theoretical.

Ethnography: particular, descriptive.

‘Emic’ versus ‘etic’? Again the answer is yes, to some extent — and provided that they are not regarded as water-tight compartments. That is, ethnography cannot be the mere accumulation of an undigested mass of data: it has to be interpretive to some degree, if only because the data has to be collected and selected by observers. And on the other hand, anthropology cannot be purely theoretical: it has to answer the questions ‘What are the limits of human nature?’ ‘What is and is not empirically possible?’ In other words, it has to *account* for the data. Anthropology sets out to account for the *variability* of human experience: ethnography has as its object the *varieties* of human experience. In Dan Sperber’s words (1985):

(Ethnographers) are more interested in specific cultures than in Homo Sapiens’ cultural abilities and dispositions.

It would be foolish to imagine that these programmes could be carried out globally, that is, that we could have an anthropology that handled everything in all cultures and an ethnography that handled cultures one by one in every possible detail. Labels like ‘Physical anthropology’ and ‘The ethnography of communication’ bear witness to what is an obvious practical and conceptual necessity. Therefore, in principle, there is nothing to stop us thinking and talking in terms such as ‘Educational anthropology’ and ‘The ethnography of education’.

The ethnography of autonomy, then, would be one aspect of the ethnography of education. Its tasks would be to describe and interpret cultural and self-directed educational principles. Its main focus would be the *representations* (i.e. *descriptions plus interpretations*) of learning in a given society. From the point of view of our immediate interests, therefore, they would include:

1. *Representations of learning*

i.e. the way in which the learning process is conceived of in a society: how to learn, attitudes to learning.

2. *Representations of language*

i.e. views about what language is, its nature, status and use.

3. *Representations of language learning*

i.e. ideas about how languages are and should be learnt: what languages are worth learning, models, difficulties and errors, etc.

Where could we turn to for information on these topics? Well, in one sense, I suppose, almost anywhere: they are so wide and so complex that the real problems are knowing where to close the list — and where to start. Cases could certainly be made out for including:

- Comparative education.
- The sociology of education.
- Psychology of almost every shape and colour, but in particular the psychology of learning, social psychology and psycholinguistics.
- Linguistics and language didactics, ethnolinguistics, the ethnography of communication, contrastive linguistics.
- History, geography, politics, religion.

Even though, on examination, some of these disciplines can be disqualified from our point of view — comparative education is largely institutional, the psychology of learning until recently was largely the behaviouristic study of teaching, contrastive linguistics focuses on structures — even so such an approach is impossibly unwieldy. For the moment, therefore, I would like to suggest simply taking as a starting-point a discipline — not even *the* discipline — which coincides with each of our three categories of representations:

1. Representations of learning — *Anthropology*
2. Representations of language — *Ethnolinguistics*
3. Representations of language learning — the *Social Psychology of second language learning* with particular reference to studies of *learning styles*.

Obviously, these equations are conceptual artefacts, but they do provide a series of pegs to hang ideas on, so provided we do not take the demarcation lines they establish too seriously, I do not think too much harm is done.

1. Anthropology

The question of learning is absolutely central to anthropological inquiry. If we follow Clyde Kluckhohn's famous adage that

Every man is like all other men, every man is like some other man, every man is like no other man

then the social sciences, by definition, focus on the second set of characteristics — what we have in common with some of our fellows, men and women in groups. And what we have in common with some others is, again by definition, learnt, and what is learnt is subject to variation.

The anthropologist, then, who wishes to describe culture does so

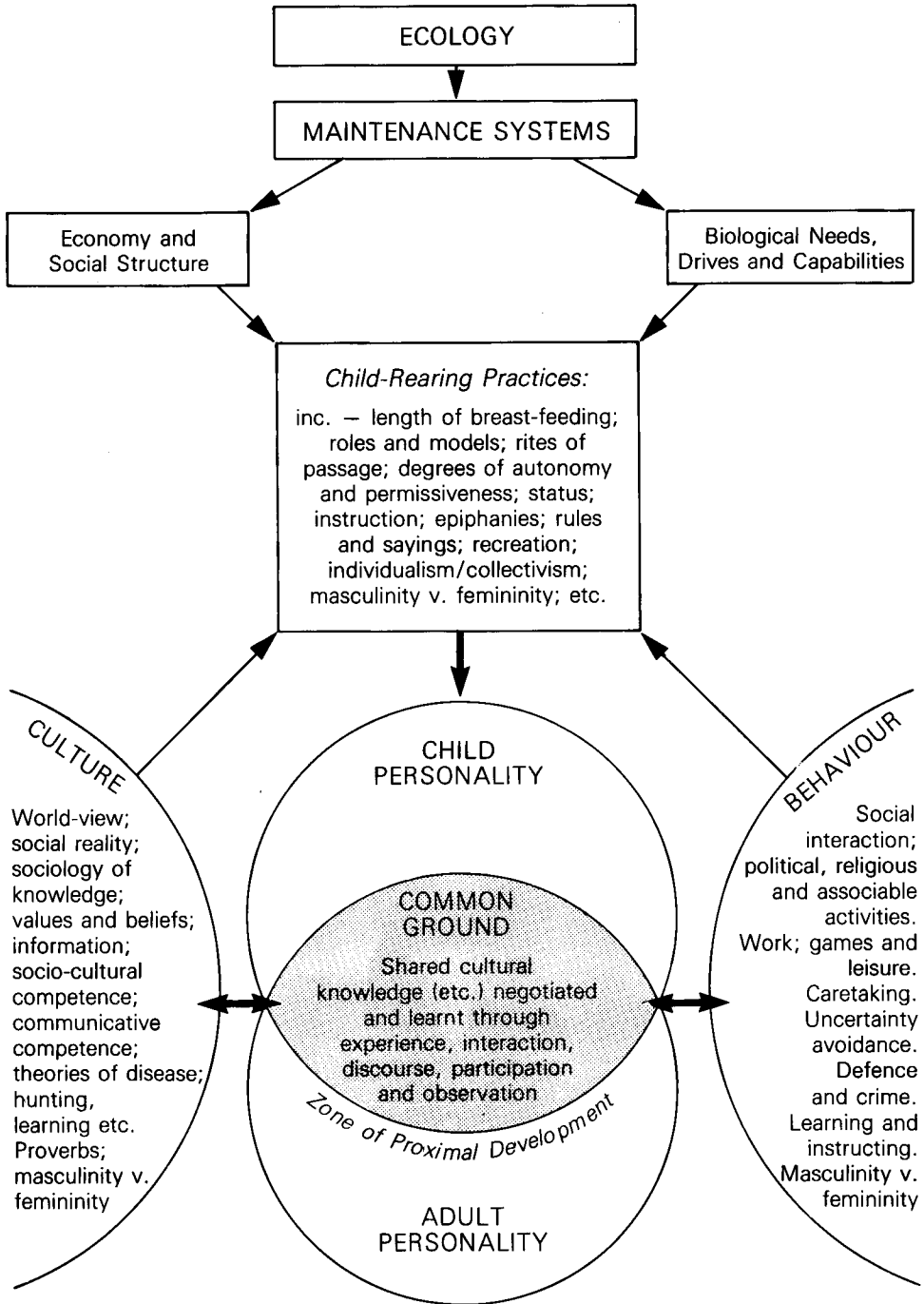
- (i) in terms of what is learnt (common-sense traditions and history of the group, values, beliefs, attitudes and so on) and
- (ii) in terms of how it is transmitted (child-rearing practices, formal and informal instruction, proverbs, games, rites of passage, sanctions, and so on). 'Know that' as opposed to 'know how', if you like. It is this second category which is of most interest to us here: learning a capacity presupposes a capacity to learn, and it is precisely that capacity to learn which defines the limits of anthropology.

Culture is knowledge, the knowledge necessary if we are to participate in an appropriate manner in the various situations and activities life puts in our way: it includes knowing how to fish and dance, use a telephone, drive a car or a bargain, how to talk — and how to learn these capacities. Interaction and interactive discourse play a primary role in the transmission and distribution of social knowledge, and it is reasonable to assume that the ways in which that knowledge is distributed in a given culture will influence the way its members learn to learn. Learning is a social process and varies according to the nature of the society in question. To make this more concrete and detailed, let us look at some of the factors which anthropologists have identified as playing a role in the social learning process. The diagram on the facing page expresses a model of the relationship between culture and learning to which most modern anthropologists could subscribe.

Most of the terms here are either transparent or technical-but-familiar. However, there is one set (to be identified in various places in the diagram) that I would like to comment on briefly, partly because they are less familiar, but mostly because they have been subject to the most thorough definition and quantitative study in the fields of social attitudes. These are the 'Four Dimensions of National Culture' identified by Geert Hofstede and the research teams at both the European Institute for Advanced Studies in Brussels and the Institute for Research on Intercultural Cooperation in Arnhem.

Working through a major international corporation, Hofstede was able to distribute and analyse 116,000 questionnaires for fifty different cultures. The project started in 1967 and issued its latest report in 1983. Hofstede also integrated into his own analysis about forty previous studies comparing five or more countries.

An anthropological model of social learning



In outline, these four dimensions were identified by a mixture of multi-variate statistics and theoretical reasoning. They are:

1. Individualism versus collectivism
2. Large or small power distance
3. Strong or weak uncertainty avoidance
4. Masculinity versus femininity

1. *Individualism versus collectivism*

The fundamental issue involved is the relation between an individual and his or her fellow individuals. At one end of the scale we find societies in which the ties between individuals are very loose. Everyone is supposed to look after his or her own self-interest and maybe the interest of his or her immediate family. This is made possible by the large amount of freedom that such a society leaves individuals. At the other end of the scale, we find societies in which the ties between individuals are very tight. People are born into collectivities or ingroups which may be their extended family . . . their tribe or their village. Everybody is supposed to look after the interest of his or her ingroup and to have no other opinions and beliefs than the opinions and beliefs of their ingroup. (page 79)

That was Hofstede's description of an opposition which is of course a classical qualitative dimension of anthropological thought and which it is recognized has an absolutely fundamental formative influence on social learning patterns. Rather ominously for me and my anxieties, Hofstede adds that:

It appears that the degree of individualism in a country is statistically related to that country's wealth. (page 79)

2. *Power distance*

The fundamental issue involved is how society deals with the fact that people are unequal . . . the level of Power Distance is related to the degree of centralisation of authority and the degree of autocratic leadership . . . there is a global relationship between Power Distance and Collectivism: Collectivist countries always show large power distances, but individualist countries do not always show small power distances. (page 81)

If you accept that in many countries the teacher is a figure of authority, then this, too, is of direct concern to us, the implication being that in high power distance countries it would be more difficult to change the complementary role-relationships between teacher and learner since such changes would inevitably imply a challenge to the socio-political status quo.

3. *Uncertainty avoidance*

The fundamental issue here is how society deals with the fact that time runs only one way . . . we have to live with uncertainty because the future is unknown . . . Some societies socialise their members into accepting this uncertainty and not becoming upset by it. People . . . will tend to accept each day as it comes. They will take risks rather easily. They will not work as hard. They will be relatively tolerant of behaviour and opinions different

from their own because they do not feel threatened by them. Such societies are called 'Weak Uncertainty Avoidance societies' . . . people have a natural tendency to feel secure. (*page 81*)

Strong uncertainty societies, Hofstede goes on to say (*page 81-83*), try to beat the future through a proliferation of laws and rules and through religious or political ideologies: they display higher levels of anxiety, aggressiveness and intolerance.

4. *Masculinity versus femininity*

The fundamental issue involved is the division of roles between the sexes . . . we can classify societies on whether they try to maximise or minimise the social sex role division . . . I have called those with a maximised social sex role division 'masculine' and those with a relatively small sex role division 'feminine'. (*Hofstede, page 83*)

In principle, a diagram like that on *page 21*, which sets out to state the relationships which hold between culture and personality in terms of social learning practices, should provide us with a list of criteria for identifying those societies which are more or less conducive to a particular educational approach, such as self-direction. In fact, though, this is merely a pipe-dream: in our present state of knowledge, the most we can hope for is rather weak retrospective explanatory power. That is, we can trace back certain observed attitudes and behaviours to particular sources specified in the model. But let's be wise after the event by all means — as long as we can be sure that we are being wise.

So let us look back for a minute at the four groups which I mentioned at the beginning of the paper — Danes, Americans, Moroccans and Vietnamese. Is it possible to make any valid or interesting statements, to obtain any insights into their behaviour such as I sketched it on the basis of this model? I think it is, although I quite appreciate that I should hedge my opinion with a million and one reservations, particularly as regards the status and accuracy of the original observations.

The Danes A thumb-nail sketch of social learning practices in Denmark would certainly emphasize the high degree of social collectivity, the widespread early peer-group interaction, with low competitiveness and the use of affective rather than institutional sanctions. Nonetheless, this has to be balanced against Hofstede's study which shows Danes as combining high individualism with very small power distance and extremely weak uncertainty avoidance. Taken together, these factors certainly describe a cultural stereotype favouring small, autonomous groups. Those of you who know the work of Leni Dam will no doubt be convinced that I am simply doing some post hoc rationalization here. If that is true, and as things stand I have to confess that it may well be, it still means that the model is helping us identify traits which seem to fit the facts.

The Americans Naturally, I feel extremely uncomfortable about making generalizations about such a huge population, though it is worth pointing out that the groups we have dealt with at the CRAPEL have all been relatively homogeneous in socio-professional terms. So for 'Americans' read 'our Americans'. Most recent studies have tended to modify the image of the autonomous child and permissive parents, which has for some time been the European stereotype. Instead, we get the picture of a child who enjoys extensive rights, particularly as regards discourse, which as we have seen is crucial in the social distribution of knowledge. We tend to forget that the right to ask 'Why' is a cultural variable: both in the States and in England it is recognized that children go through a phase of repeated Why-ing — 'Daddy, why are bananas yellow?' — but this behaviour is itself a social learning construct.

These extensive rights, though, are apparently regulated by complex social rules and sanctions which are none the weaker for being largely peer-group controlled, though it does give the impression that the American child and teenager is a social category apart. Moreover, the overt attitudes and values of both formal and informal instruction — self expression, non-coerciveness, caring secure relationships, cooperation rather than competition — are regarded by many observers as being largely counterbalanced by what one might call the hidden social curriculum. Collaborative work techniques — the team, the gang, the class exist alongside the world's highest individualism rating according to Hofstede, and only relatively small power distance and uncertainty avoidance.

I suppose that in this case, my point of reference is Dr Spock: anyone who doubts the importance of child-rearing patterns only needs to follow the well-documented relationship between developments in his advice and later behaviour.

The Moroccans Arabic-speaking countries are unfortunately dealt with as a single group in the Hofstede studies. However, from a small number of informants (all of them male) I have pieced together the following tentative outline of Moroccan child-rearing and social learning practices:

Phase one — which is variously reported as lasting between four and seven years, but also as lasting as long as the breast-feeding period — is characterised by the close and loving attentiveness of female caretakers. These caretakers are highly permissive with respect to later rules, though of course we are speaking of babes and toddlers here: the same caveat applies to the consensus about the very low degree of autonomy allowed to children. More reliable is the general agreement that this phase manifests a high degree of collectivity which is suddenly and drastically altered at the beginning of the second phase. Indeed, to a considerable extent, it defines the second phase, which is marked by the withdrawal of care by females and by the imposition of the full range of socio-religious rules and sanctions (which are often physical) in both formal and informal contexts. These are explicit socio-religious learning obligations, including

the rote-learning and chanting of sacred texts. The third phase marks the beginning of adulthood: a considerable range of rights and roles are conferred on the (male) individual, dependent on conformity to social stereotypes and behaviours.

In Hofstede's terms, there is large power distance, relatively low individualism and strong uncertainty avoidance. This was confirmed by my own informants, who agreed almost unanimously that initiative, activeness and ambition were anti-social traits, closely akin to egotism.

The Vietnamese The long period of war and evolution, the breakdown of traditional values and practices, together with the imposition of a collectivist, authoritarian ideology and the difficulty in obtaining information make the picture a very blurred one indeed. For what it is worth, related cultures are classed in the Hofstede survey as low individualism, large power distance, strong uncertainty avoidance. More insightful, perhaps, are the statements made by Vietnamese learners in interviews with myself and my colleagues. What emerges is such a strong commitment to the group that any differentiation of tasks is seen as antisocial: learning, that is, is seen as a group activity, as a negotiative process. Any attempt to get below group level — for example, by analysing individual needs or even by suggesting that different individuals could use the same materials in different ways — is regarded as 'subjective' and 'socially irrelevant'. In one long discussion with the present group, the ideas of autonomy and self-direction were classified under the heading 'spiritual life', along with 'walks in the forest' and 'philosophy'.

2. Ethnolinguistics

The second area we had identified as worth investigating was *representations of language* and the discipline in question was *ethnolinguistics*.

The ethnolinguist sets out to describe and analyse the relationships which hold between social group, culture and language: in other words, he or she studies a particular group's universe as it is organized and vehiculated through and in language and the way in which the members of the group themselves view the nature, status and use of language.

The most direct way of studying these matters — and one which is clearly of immediate relevance to the present topic — is to examine how communicative competence is taught and acquired in a given community. This topic has long been central to anthropological linguistics and the ethnography of communication;¹ a glance back at the diagram will confirm the importance attributed to linguistic instruments of social control in child-rearing. However, to the best of my knowledge, there has been no systematic attempt to extrapolate from this very rich and detailed literature on attitudes to L₂ acquisition (see, however, Section 3).

For the moment, therefore, we can only speculate about the form such extrapolation might take: presumably it would involve the identification

of L_1 representations and practices, and testing hypotheses concerning their influence on representations of the L_2 , of appropriate L_2 behaviour and of the learner's 'second language self-image'.

Rather than trying to set out in detail the theoretical and methodological ramifications of this approach (a vast but certainly not impossible task) I would like the reader to consider the following examples:

- (i) In Burundi, the socially inferior member of an interactive pair is expected, in certain relatively well-defined circumstances, to feign communicative incompetence by stuttering, making lexical and grammatical mistakes, etc. (Albert, 1972). Clearly, if learners transfer their L_1 representations to the L_2 , this will have direct and perhaps dire consequences for their learning behaviour. This does, in fact, seem to be the case, according to a Burundian sociolinguist, M. Maurice Mazunya (personal communication).
- (ii) A mirror-image of the above situation is described by Nigel Barley in that funny and profound book 'The Innocent Anthropologist'. He describes his bewilderment at the contemptuous reception given by the Dowayo tribe in the Cameroon to his attempts to learn their language. They would react to his attempts with disbelief 'But how is it he does not speak our tongue? He has been amongst us for two weeks'. Only later did he realize that this was partly due to the fact that:

the Dowayos have such a low view of their own tongue, their own chiefs refusing to use this crude, unsubtle instrument, that they cannot understand how anyone could fail to learn it.

Moreover, it later transpired that the Dowayos also believe that white men who spend any length of time with them are reincarnated spirits of Dowayo sorcerers, i.e. they are black, really — and they speak the language. This explained:

... the annoyance sometimes manifested by Dowayos at my linguistic failings after months among them: they were regarded as pathetic attempts to disguise my essentially Dowayo nature. It was common knowledge that I was capable of understanding anything I really wanted to. Why did I insist on pretending the language was new to me?

- (iii) In Bali, according to Margaret Meade (1955), children are regarded as reincarnations of their ancestors and fully competent members of society. To sustain this social fiction, adults continually put words into their mouths and speak on their behalves. The children are allowed to do nothing for themselves. The adults even shape the children's gestures with their own hands.

As it happens, the three examples I have quoted above all illustrate one major aspect of linguistic representations — the status and notion of error. It may now be generally accepted by linguists and teachers alike that errors are an essential ingredient in language learning, but learners

are neither teachers nor linguists and are more likely to appeal to representations based on the status of social error in the L_1 than to studies of the learning process.

Other aspects of the social representation of language which impinge on attitudes to (and behaviour in) second languages include:

- (a) The overall status of discourse: Is discourse in quantity, for example, dangerous or demeaning? Is precision valued (or beauty, or rapidity, etc.)?
- (b) The distribution of linguistic roles and their relationships to categories of speech-events.
- (c) The communicative strategies available (including compensation strategies, politeness, indirect speech acts, etc.).
- (d) The relationship between speech and writing and speech and non-verbal communication.
- (e) The values attributed as verbal games: euphemisms and taboos, formulaic expressions; literature; songs.
- (f) Perceptions of the relationships between language and social institutions, such as class, religion, the educational system.

This list is nothing like exhaustive, but we are clearly drifting towards our third area of interest, social psychology.

3. Social psychology

Finally, then, let us turn briefly to the third area of study which I mentioned as a potential source of insight and information for the ethnographer of autonomy: social psychology. There are at least two main lines of research which are of interest in this respect: the first is the social psychology of languages in contact, and the second is the social psychology of learning styles (if, indeed, they can be said to be 'social').

A great amount of work has been done in the field of social psychology of languages in contact and bilingualism in the last thirty years or so, and in the past decade the trend has only accelerated (Giles and St. Clair, 1979; Hamers and Blanc, 1983). If anything, the problem for the outsider is the plethora of models and approaches which all have something to say about the relationship between learners' perceptions of the L_2 and of L_2 speakers, between the study of the relative statuses of L_1/L_2 and motivation, and between learning motivation and success.

From our present point of view, though, the important thing is to note that there are certain notions which are common to all these models, and in particular:

- (i) The view that many seemingly disparate aspects of social interaction can be accounted for by viewing them as contributing to a progressive reduction of *uncertainty*.
- (ii) The view that the overall aim of social interaction is to establish a *collectivity*.

Naturally, these two terms make us prick up our ears, since they both figure prominently in our discussion of the general anthropological theory of social learning.

Charles Berger's uncertainty theory

Berger proposes that in the early stages of a relationship, the participants set out to reduce uncertainty about each other's views, aims, social identity and so on. To start with, they have high uncertainty levels and are therefore doubtful about what attitudes and behaviours to attribute to the other and what would constitute appropriate behaviour. This approach clearly has implications for cross-cultural communication, where presumably uncertainty would tend to be higher than in native speaker-native speaker interactions. But it also has much to say about the negotiation of new roles, as is often the case in the helper-learner relationship. Put the two together, and you have a candidate for a model of interpersonal perception in the ethnography of autonomy.

Accommodation theory

Accommodation theory has incorporated ideas from four other socio-psychological theories (Giles and St. Clair, 1979). These are: similarity-attraction theory; social exchange; casual attribution and Tajfel's theory of intergroup distinctiveness. In very general terms, these theories have given rise to the study of convergence in behaviour and attitudes and of the various bundles of social criteria which we activate to interpret and evaluate the behaviour of others. Again, the implications for the study of intercultural representations, perceptions and behaviour are interesting; indeed valuable work in bilingual settings has already been done on this basis.

Amongst the important insights and information to come out of such work is the degree to which concepts such as learners' *needs* will have to be modified if we are to avoid being ethnocentric. And I hardly need to point out just how central to the whole idea of autonomy and self-direction that notion is. We should take some notice of the fact that social psychologists working in this field are making explicit and specific attacks on the use of the notion of language need as it is generally understood in applied linguistics. Hamers and Blanc (1983) for example, in what is in my opinion the most important recent book on bilingualism, argue that ' "need" is a psychological term which has been badly understood, badly defined and badly applied in language teaching'. It is certainly true of the standard sort of tripartite categorization when seen from this point of view: what we are to make, for example, of the following statistic, taken from a Ph.D. thesis which has just been completed by a Thai colleague, Amonsiri Sansuratikul (1986): she found that when asked to identify their main 'needs' from a list of suggestions, 62 per cent of her subjects replied that they were learning French 'because it was beautiful'. Yet in our understanding of the term and of their situation, these respondents had clear, pressing needs and incentives. This research was carried out in

Thai, by the way, so it does not seem that the problem could be superficially linguistic: there is good reason to believe, therefore, that what we are coming up against is a cross-cultural difference in representing one of the most important variables in the learning process.

It is quite obvious, then, that this whole area of social psychology would need to be taken into account in educational anthropology in general and the ethnography of autonomy in particular. However, I will not pursue this topic further partly because I have a nasty suspicion that I may be trying to teach my grandmother to suck eggs. Only last year I was wittering on to a group of teachers about the importance of taking into account their learners' perceptions of the L₁ and L₂ speakers, when I noticed a lady with a rather far-away look in her eyes. Didn't she agree, I asked. 'Oh, I agree', she said, with a sort of you're-telling-me intonation: 'I agree — I teach Russian in a Polish secondary school'.

So I am going to move on now to look at the second aspect of social psychology — or it is just of psychology? — which I mentioned: *learning styles*. It is here, after all, that one might have expected to find an answer to the question as to whether intra-group variation in learning and attitudes to learning is greater or less than inter-group variation. In other words, does cultural variation exist, and if it does is it important enough to merit taking into consideration, or should we bypass it and go straight on to individual variation? Unfortunately, such questions have not been addressed by workers in this area as far as I know. (I am not talking about work in intercultural education, nor about the work that has been done on cross-cultural variation in perception or in natural logic.) The most obvious reason for this is that most studies dealing with the performance of ethnic groups in education have been carried out in a thoroughly teacher-centred perspective; moreover, the researchers concerned would not touch with a bargepole the various discreditable and discredited approaches to ethnopsychology, and understandably so; instead, they have focused on *post facto* analyses of educational attainment which are valuable but only distantly related to our present interests.

What we can do, though, is to take models of learning or taxonomies of learning styles and ask ourselves whether they would be appropriate to the task in hand, whether they lend themselves to cross-cultural comparisons. In fact, if you look at almost any of these approaches (Carver, 1984; Nseendi, 1984 . . .) we find that they start out from 'culture' or 'milieu' or 'social factors', but rarely go into details or have any contrastive dimension.

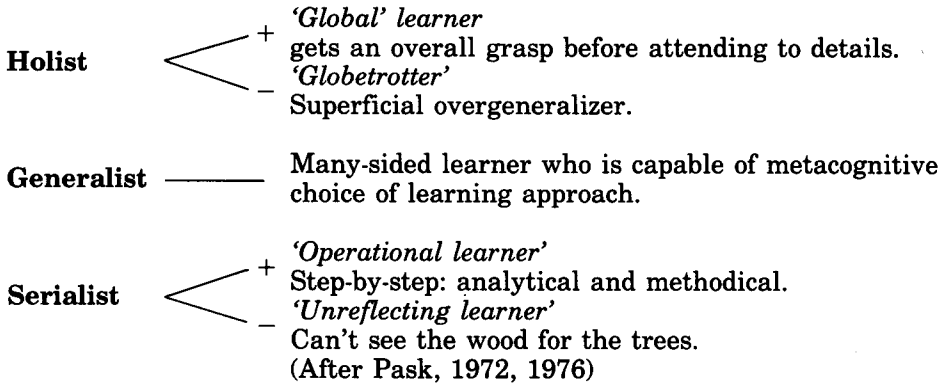
I suggest, therefore, looking briefly at some of these taxonomies with this in mind; I have tried to choose what seems to me to be a representative variety of approaches. These include:

1. Pask (1972, 1976);
2. B. and L. Fischer (1979) — both of which use the term "style";
3. Letteri's *Cognitive Profile* (1982);
4. Kolb's *General Theory of Experiential Learning* (1984).

It is obviously out of the question to try to give a balanced critical review of these various approaches: but that is not my intention, either. What I want to do is, first, remind you what they say and, secondly, ask whether they are suitable for our purposes.

Pask

This is probably the best-known model of them all and the opposition between the Holist and the Serialist is intuitively helpful and widely accepted.



However, it is fundamentally a binary model and for reasons related to the history of their discipline, ethnographers are wary if not positively allergic to such models. It has been said that 'there are two kinds of people: those who believe you can divide people into two kinds, and those who think you can't'. I happen to belong to the second group.

Fischer and Fischer

- | |
|--|
| <p>LEARNING STYLE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The incremental learner 2. The intuitive learner 3. The 'specialist' 4. The 'all-rounder' 5. The involved learner 6. The uninvolved learner 7. The structure-dependent learner 8. The structure-independent learner 9. The eclectic learner <p>(After B. & L. Fischer, 1979)</p> |
|--|

There are clear similarities to Pask's classification here. The incremental learner corresponds to his operational learner, their eclectic learner to

his generalist. To the extent that this is a four-dimensional model, where the learner can be situated very precisely in a matrix representing cognitive space, this does seem more appropriate to our needs. In principle, there should be nothing to stop us plotting different ethnic groups into the matrix and drawing conclusions. There are, however, two problems: the first is that the diagnostic tools used for classifying learners along these dimensions might themselves be ethnocentric. The second is that there is no guarantee that in a given culture we might not find dimensions not represented here: like Grice's maxims, these might not be universals, just a description of the question but without claiming that such-and-such a learning style is better or worse than another.

Letteri

Letteri, like Pask, introduces a judgemental dimension into his 'cognitive profile': the more a learner tends towards those characteristics indicated in the left-hand column, the better he or she will be at learning. In my view, this is enough to disqualify them both from consideration here. We do not need to know whether one approach is better or more efficient than another. The combination of universalist assumptions with value-judgements is not a good portent.

<i>COGNITIVE PROFILE</i>		
1. Analytic	.....	Global
2. Focused	.....	Unfocused
3. Narrow	.....	Broad
4. Complex	.....	Simple
5. Reflective	.....	Impulsive
6. Sharpening	.....	Levelling
7. Tolerant	.....	Intolerant
(After Letteri, 1982)		

A criticism that can be made of all three of these models is that they are insufficiently social for our purposes, that is, they describe individual psychological strategies rather than grappling with learning situations as such. For example, none of them can be easily related to the notion of role, which is crucial in self-directed learning. (Riley, 1986).

All three of these approaches to learning, then, present one major disadvantage. As Jerome Bruner has pointed out:

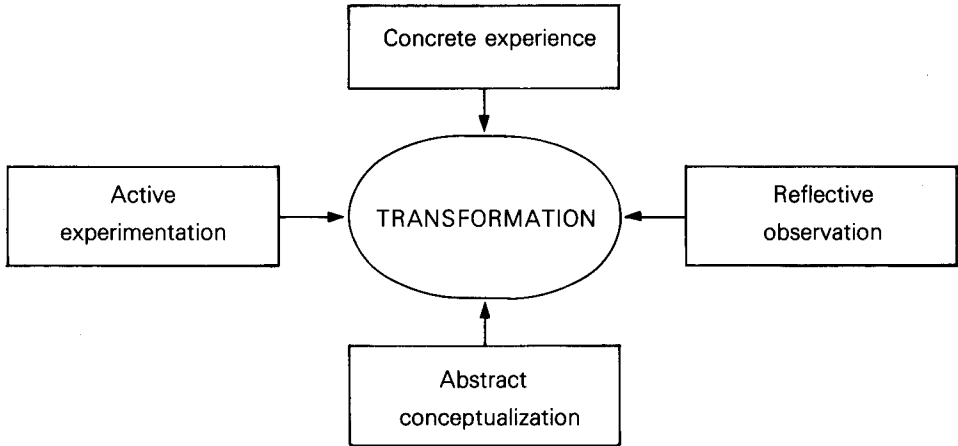
Human mental activity for its full expression upon being linked to a cultural toolkit . . . we are well advised when studying mental activity to take into account the tools employed in that activity.

But as we saw when we looked at our anthropological model of learning, these tools are socially transmitted. The study of learning, therefore, cannot be separated from the study of interaction. All three of these

models are based on idealized, laboratory psychology where learning occurs, in Bruner's words 'solely on the basis of private encounters with exemplars of natural states'. As Bruner insists 'most of our approaches to the world are mediated through negotiation with others'.

Kolb

The last approach in my list does seem to some extent at least to escape these criticisms. In Kolb's title, the emphasis is immediately on experience, and the experience is that of a social reality:



For both Kolb and Kohonen (1987) learning is essentially seen as a process of resolution of conflicts between two dialectically opposed dimensions. These are:

The prehension dimension, referring to the way in which the individual grasps experience. Prehension includes two modes of knowing: apprehension and comprehension. Apprehension is, as far as I can judge, our old friend insight learning, instant and intuitive knowledge and understanding, without any need for logical processes, inquiry or analysis. Comprehension involves the introduction of conscious order into this flow of apprehended sensations.

The transformation dimension On this dimension, experience is transformed or processed either by reflective observation or by active experimentation. A learner who is at the active end of the cline is more likely to take risks, aiming at success but without being too put out by errors or failure. A reflective learner is willing to sacrifice successful performance to avoid errors, and he or she prefers to transform his or her experience through reflective observation. Experiential learning is, therefore, a four-stage cycle combining all the stages of the dimensions.

To the extent that the experiential model is open-ended and to the extent that it has a truly social-psychological dimension, where the negotiative and interactive aspects of learning can be taken into account, it is a suitable tool for the cross-cultural study of learning. However, it cannot

be said to be a model of learning styles, either in general or in detail, since it does not provide the methodological tools for situating learners or groups of learners within the conceptual matrix it proposes.

Conclusion

In his essay on 'The Language of Education', Jerome Bruner propounds the view that learning is the creation and re-creation of meaning by the individual:

I have come increasingly to recognise that most learning in most settings is a communal activity, a sharing of the culture . . . it is this that leads me to emphasize not only discovery and invention but the importance of negotiating and sharing — in a word, of joint culture-creating.

It is this process of 'joint culture-creating', in which two subjective worlds are made to overlap, however partially or fleetingly, to form an intersubjective world, that defines the individual's participation in learning and it is the study of this process which is the object of the ethnography of autonomy.

Note

1. The historical and conceptual relationships between these disciplines and their specific contributions to the acquisition of Communicative Competence is fully documented in Hymes (1964). Bachmann, Lindenfeld & Simenon (1981) is an excellent recent survey. Saville-Trocke (1982) is an intelligent and readable introduction to the ethnography of communication.

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Autonomy and Individualization in Whole-class Instruction

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Is radicalism really necessary?

'Autonomy' and 'individualization' are words that typically conjure up images of situations where classroom instruction has been largely abandoned in favour of giving learners opportunities to work by themselves in the quite different environment of brand new 'self-access' centres. Not long ago 'autonomy' and 'individualization' were terms generally seen as belonging to the 'lunatic fringe'. They are no doubt more widely acceptable now, but they are still, I think, terms typically associated with a radical restructuring of our whole conception of language pedagogy, a restructuring that involves the rejection of the traditional classroom and the introduction of wholly new ways of working.

One interpretation that it is tempting to make following the above line of argument is that 'autonomy' and 'individualization' appear to be thought of as plants that have to be imported from some exotic place. But because they are plants that are not indigenous to the classroom, that have no roots there, they have no chance of even surviving, let alone of thriving in that alien environment, and so an entirely new environment has to be created for them.

My main aim here is to suggest that, no matter how infertile the soil may be in the whole-class environment, we can, if we look, find the seeds of 'autonomy' and 'individualization' even in that apparently inhospitable place. If I am right, then wherever radical restructuring is not an immediately viable proposition (and that may be practically everywhere), we will have a case for suggesting that it may be well worth trying to develop 'autonomy' and 'individualization' from whatever seeds we can already find in the traditional language classroom.

Are the seeds there, though?

What reasons do we have for expecting to be able to find the seeds of 'autonomy' and 'individualization' in the traditional whole-class teaching situation?

1. *The Idiosyncrasy of Classroom Language Learning* Perhaps the most obvious clue lies in the idiosyncrasy of classroom language learning. In an important sense, as I have argued elsewhere (1984) and will illustrate below, each lesson is a different lesson for each learner, and as teachers know very well already, different learners take away quite different things from the same lesson. It is not simply a matter of some learners just taking away more than others. Recent research conducted by Assia Slimani at Lancaster has revealed a remarkable degree of idiosyncrasy among Algerian university-level learners asked at the end of a number of lessons what they have learned (the full procedure is briefly explained in Allwright, 1984). About 40 per cent of the things they claim to have learned are claimed by one person only out of the thirteen in the class. 65 per cent of the items are claimed by three people at most. Such a high level of idiosyncrasy is interesting to consider in connection with the general issue of the relationship between teaching and learning — my major focus in 1984 — and the more specific issue of the possibility that learners tend to follow a natural order of acquisition regardless of the sequence in which language material is presented to them. Here the important point is simply that if learners somehow individualize what they learn, it may be interesting to look into what happens in classrooms that makes such idiosyncrasy of 'uptake' possible. Perhaps the learners are already 'autonomously individualizing' their classroom experiences.

2. *The Co-productive Nature of Classroom Lessons* The clue to this suggestion lies in the by now probably familiar notion of the language lesson (or any other lesson) as a 'co-production', the product of the interactive work of all the participants acting collectively (see Allwright, 1984a). As soon as we look at classroom data we find evidence of learners contributing to classroom discourse and thereby making a difference to what happens, to what becomes available to be learned, not only by the learners who intervene, but also by anyone else who bothers to take advantage of the learning opportunities so provided. A minimal example, but from actual data, may perhaps suffice here to illustrate the point:

S 'Look' is 'see', right?
T Yes.

The learner's question was prompted by the teacher's reading of a sample sentence from the textbook that contained the word 'look' (the focus of the teaching was on 'what' and 'which', however). This simple and very brief intervention by a curious learner makes available to that learner and to all the other learners present the opportunity to learn something, albeit something misleading, about the relationship between the meanings of 'look' and 'see'.

This minimal example can also be seen, however, as an example of a learner 'autonomously individualizing' his learning experience. He seems to have made an individual and independent decision to intervene in the lesson, with a question that was hardly likely to be on the teacher's

agenda. In so doing he was able to redirect the focus of the lesson so that an issue of immediate interest to himself, and perhaps himself alone, was at least momentarily addressed.

Much more elaborate examples of such autonomous individualizing behaviour could easily be found, but the very simplicity and familiar triviality of the example chosen above should help to convince the sceptical reader that the phenomenon is commonplace rather than exceptional, at least in any classroom where the teacher allows the learners to speak on their own initiative. Since not all teachers do regularly allow such autonomous behaviour, however, it may be helpful to give what may be an even more recognizable example:

- S I was at home.
T O.K. You stayed at home.
S I stayed at home.
T O.K. P, could you ask . . . ?

Here the teacher had directed the learners to ask each other and answer the question: 'What did you do at the weekend?' Our learner here made what the teacher apparently saw as an unsatisfactory choice of verb, and so he (the data is real again and the teacher was indeed male) prompted the substitution of the item he preferred. There was no need for the learner to use any discursal initiative, because she had been nominated to speak by the teacher, but the unsatisfactory nature of her utterance had the effect of prompting the teacher to offer her, and all the other learners simultaneously, the opportunity to learn something more about verb choice. There is no reason to believe that this learner autonomously decided she wanted to learn something about verb choice, of course, but her error succeeded at least in individualizing the lesson, for a moment, so that the teaching focussed momentarily on a matter directly related to her own developing knowledge of English.

3. Immediate Implications All I am saying, of course, is that all learners' errors (and perhaps not only their errors) can be looked upon as moves that have the potential effect of individualizing instruction, and all learners' questions can be looked upon as autonomous moves to achieve that effect.

There is no way that the point could possibly be 'proven' here, but enough has perhaps been said to convince the reader that 'autonomy' and 'individualization' are already features, and probably very common features, of whole-class instruction of a perfectly traditional kind. Indeed it may be the very familiarity of the kind of phenomena presented by way of example above that has prevented us from recognizing that they do in fact constitute cases, however minimum and embryonic, of those apparently exotic plants 'autonomy' and 'individualization'. But the very fact that the examples are so familiar is itself evidence that these so-called 'exotic' plants are in fact indigenous varieties after all.

What difference does it make?

It could certainly be argued that the mere fact that these plants can be found, even in abundance, in the infertile soil of whole-class instruction, is no evidence that they can ever flourish there, no matter how assiduously we tend them. The triviality of my examples could even be used to support the argument that such weak plants are most likely to simply wither and die before they come to maturity. In fairness it could also be argued that some of Assia Slimani's findings might support such an interpretation. She has found, for example, no reliable relationship between asking a question in class and reporting having learned the answer given by the teacher. In some cases some other learner would report having learned the answer, and not the asker of the original question at all.

Such a pessimistic interpretation is not the only one possible, though, since we could at least consider the possibility, even if we admit that the soil is currently very infertile, of doing something to improve its quality. Perhaps we do not need to move the plants themselves to some other ground, but could usefully concentrate our effects on enriching the soil where they are already. What does this mean in practice, however, for language teaching?

Working on the practical possibilities

If we look closely at transcripts of classroom lessons then it is not difficult to see points at which the opportunity could have been taken to develop, rather than neglect or even crush, the small beginnings of learner autonomy and self-individualization.

As an appendix I have added some pages from the transcript of a university-level ESL grammar lesson taught in the USA some years ago to a small group of Hispanic pre-sessional students.

What follows are some steps that readers could take (ideally not working in isolation but with others) as a way of focusing attention on these few pages of data.

1. Choose one learner in particular, perhaps either 'Si' or 'Lu' as suggested in the original handout.
2. Mark all the contributions of your chosen learner.
3. Identify, for the sake of starting with the easiest cases, just those contributions that are apparently spontaneous — not simply responses to the teacher in any obvious way.
4. In each case consider the sorts of *decisions* the learner in question had to take before making the contribution.
5. Then, when a good number of such contributions have been looked at in this way, see if there is a pattern to the sorts of decisions this learner already seems able to take on his or her own initiative.
6. The next step could be to try to determine whether or not the learner in question could conceivably be 'better' in some way at taking the decisions he or she is already taking, and, if so, how help could be provided within the classroom discourse.

7. A further step would be to try to decide whether the learner seems to be missing out on areas of decision-making that could be profitable for a learner to pursue, even in whole-class instruction, and then to consider again how the learner might best be helped within the whole-class situation.
8. Although it might be tedious to keep on reworking the data time and time again, my next suggestion would be to repeat steps 4 to 7 in respect of the learner's apparent competence at putting decisions into action and following them through to a satisfactory conclusion. For example, there may be plenty of evidence that a given learner is willing, even keen, to try as often as possible to steer the topic of the lesson away from language and on to 'real life' (as some have suggested may be the case for 'Si'), but you may feel that the learner is really not very good at doing it and could be helped to do such a thing more efficiently, and perhaps with more sensitivity to the teacher's primary pedagogic purposes. Again it would be important to try to think of ways in which such help might be provided, within the classroom discourse. What could the teacher have said that might have pointed the learner in the desirable direction of the more profitable implementation of autonomous and individualized decision-making?

A minimalist approach to learner training

What is being advocated here is of course a minimalist approach to learner training, one based on trying to make the most of the smallest opportunities, without radicalizing anything or anybody. Ellis and James (1986) have already shown how it might be attempted in the ordinary secondary school classroom situation, by introducing a small element of learner training quite systematically into each day's lesson plan. What I am suggesting here is simply that their approach is more than justified when we look in detail at classroom data, and that looking at classroom data might be the very best way of developing the agenda for in-class learner training work. We would need to look at data from our own classroom, of course, and not take much notice of data obtained elsewhere, but we might be able to manage with audio-recordings, rather than full transcriptions. In the long run our learners might even begin to transcribe short extracts for themselves, so that they can see at first hand just how well they are 'autonomously individualizing' the instruction they are involved in.

Final comments

I started with a horticultural metaphor and it may be as well to end with it also. I do not in any way wish to imply that self-access centres, for example, or any other alternatives to the classroom, are not desirable. All I want to suggest is that we should not overlook the possibility that the seeds of 'autonomy' and 'individualization' are to be found even in

the apparently inhospitable soil of whole-class instruction, and that if we do find these seeds there then we can, without straining our ingenuity greatly, think of ways of nurturing them, and of giving them a chance not merely to survive but perhaps even to thrive. Certainly we teachers would seem to have very little to lose, and learners could have a great deal to gain.

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Appendices

1. Workshop handout as used on 26.3.1987.
2. Transcription conventions.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the teacher and students quoted briefly in the paper and at length in the Appendix, for giving their permission for the data to be used in this way.

APPENDIX 1

- 1 T OK, let's take a look, then, at section two eight. O.K?
 Lu Two eight.
 T If there are no other questions up to this point. 'What word
 5 did you look up?' O.K. Again indefinite. I know you looked up
 a word but I don't know. So, 'What word did you look up?
 Xenophobia'.
 M Xenophobia
 10 F Xenophobia.
Several students muttering
 Lu What?
 F What?
 Lu 'Look' is 'see', right?
 15 T Yes
 Lu (Up)
 T Up? All right. That's an idiomatic expression. When you,
 when you try to find a word in the dictionary, you say you
 'look it up'.
 20 Lu You try to find.
 T O.K?
 M Look.

- Te Look at it.
Lu Look at, look at it.
- 25 T Look it up. No, look it up, in the dictionary you always look something up. *Students muttering* O.K., 'Which word means fear or hatred of strangers? Xenophobia'. Now, what word? I don't know what word it is.
- 30 An Which?
T But now when I have an idea, I'm asking about a specific word. Which one means this?
An Yeah.
T Uh.
- 35 An Fear is the same thing as (angry), angry?
T As what?
An I don't know, angry?
T Angry. Sort of. Yeah, you don't like something. If you don't like something and you don't like it very much, you hate it.
- 40 Lu You
T Hate something. If you don't like it very much. For example, I hate asparagus. OK?
- An I love it.
- 45 M You like everything.
Students muttering
T I hate asparagus.
Lu What's asparagus?
Si Asparagus?
50 T Asparagus.
Si I like it.
An You, I like it too. Yeah.
M I like it good.
T Well, anyway. That's the meaning for 'hate'.
55 OK?
Laughter, muttering
- M Asparagus.
T Just remember that. If you ever invite me to your house, don't give me asparagus.
- 60 An Oh.
Si That's what I do the first time.
Fe That's a good idea.
T First time.
Laughter
- 65 Fe Make him asparagus.
Si In the party I make you asparagus.
T Uh?
Si In the party, in the party I make you cream asparagus.
- 70 T Creamed asparagus?
Si Yeah.
T If you give me creamed asparagus that means ten points less on the Michigan test.
General laughter
- 75 M Ten points.

- Si Anyway I know (one kind of recipe).
 T *Laughs*
 Si Yeah, yeah. I'm teasing.
 T That means immediately ten points less. Ten points more for
 80 beer.
*Extended muttering, including repetition of 'ten points', and
 of 'asparagus'*
 T OK, let's go back to this.
 Lu Oh please.
 85 T Yeah.
 Lu At the second line, on second sentence, it is,
 uh, 'Which word means hatred . . . ? () What is 'hatred'?'
 T That's what we were just talking about. When you don't
 90 like something. When you don't like it very, very much. I
 hate it.
Muttering
 Da How do you spell 'hate'?'
 T Uh?
 95 Da How do you spell?
 T What?
 Da The word.
 T Hate?
 Da Yeah.
 100 T It's right there in your book.
 Da Ah.
 T *Laughs*
 Si I hate celery. Celery?
 Lu What is the pronunciation?
 105 T O.K.
 Lu The pronunciation?
 T Hatred.
 Si Hatred.
 Lu Hatred.
 110 T 'Hatred' is the noun, O.K.? (*Writes on blackboard*) The verb is
 'hate'. I hate. I hate something. OK? Do you have a question
 Au?
 Au What is xenophobia?
 T Xenophobia? Means someone who is afraid of strangers.
 115 Au Ah.
 T If you fear, if you're afraid of strangers.
 Au Do you have xenophobia? *Chuckles*
 T Uh? Do I have
 120 xenophobia? Would I be teaching you here if I had
 xenophobia? *Laughs*
 Si What is xenophobia?
 T It's xenophobia. If you don't like . . . a fear of other people.
 125 Si Fear for.
 Au Ah.
 T If you don't like other people. For example, uh
 Au *Chuckles*

- 130 -T Uh, well someone who would be very conservative, in a political sense, might be called xenophobic. That he doesn't like any foreigners. O.K?
- Si Ah, yeah.
- 135 T It applies, it makes no difference what country he's from. It is someone who doesn't like foreigners at all.
- Au O.K.
- Lu In the past time the difference between the south and the north?
- 140 T No, that's not quite the same thing. Let's look at that. You're talking about the Civil War?
- Lu Uh.
- 145 T Yeah. No, it's a different situation, O.K?
- Lu O.K.
- T All right. Are we set there? OK, we're still on section two eight. ' "Which" or "what" can occur before a word referring to either things or persons.' OK. 'Which man is German? Which one is Dutch? What men are you taking about?'
- 150 Si 'What men are you talking about?'
- T O.K. Right, in the first two you're trying to pick out.
- 155 M O.K.
- T Which one is from Columbia?
- Lu Tony.
- T OK. Right, so I'm trying to find out from among you which ones. It's not true, it's (), but what men, what men are you talking about? I don't know. I know you're talking about men but I don't know anything more. 'What men are you talking about?'
- 160 Te How do you say (conte), "contexta", in English?
- T In the context.
- Te Context.
- T Context.
- 170 Te Is necessary in the context?
- T It, everything is necessary in the context. OK, if you ask me a question and I say I can't answer it, it's because there are so many different ways to say things. All right? And sometimes you can say something in one context and you can't in another. OK, and the same thing is right in one context and wrong in the others. So all, you have to remember that: whenever, if you're gonna ask me a question give me a context. Tell me what you are taking about. How did you say it? OK? All right. ' "Which" implies a choice or a singling out.'
- 175 Lu Where are we?
- 180 T We're still on two eight, second line, second one down. "Which"
- Si "Which"
- T implies a choice.' In other words you're gonna be making a choice if . . .

- 190 – Si implies a choice.
– T you're using "which". Which, which movie did you go to see last night? OK? I know you
Si Which place
you went to dancing?

APPENDIX 2

T = teacher

F = any unidentified female voice

M = any unidentified male voice

An (female)

Au (female)

Da (male) = first two letters of identified learners'

Fe (male) names (only seven spoke of the nine

Lu (male) present).

Si (female)

Te (female)

() = uncertain or impossible transcription.

' ' = words read, most probably, from the textbook.

/ = transcriber's comments, indications of non-verbal behaviour, etc. are printed in italic.

Note also:

Indentation is used to indicate point of onset of a turn in cases of speaker overlap or rapid exchange.

A vertical line is used to indicate simultaneous onset of turns.

A hyphen is used against the speaker reference to indicate the continuation of a turn, without a pause, in cases of overlapping speech.

Learner Training

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Introduction

Learner training is increasingly being advocated as a way of preparing students to get the best out of autonomous learning. However, it is not at all clear what 'learner training' means, or how it is best applied. This paper represents my attempts to sort out and understand this developing area which I find fuzzy in its definitions and unclear in its application. A key to understanding it may be to sub-categorize the various learning strategies and techniques proposed for learner training into the three levels

- Approach to learning
- Learning plans
- Learning techniques

and to select appropriate objectives from these levels according to the learning modes to be used by the learner. Consequently one must also distinguish among learning modes, and so a scale ranging from conventional classroom at one end to autonomy at the other is proposed. In addition to proposing and describing this framework, I offer and discuss a definition of 'learner training'.

What is learner training?

Oliver Sachs, in his book 'The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat' reports the case of Madeline — a blind, elderly lady suffering from a 'developmental agnosia' in which she was unable to recognize sensations or objects through her hands. It turned out that from childhood onwards caring parents then nurses had done everything for her, fed her and dressed her, so that she had had no opportunity to develop recognition of objects and sensations through her hands: 'useless lumps of dough' she described them. Sachs initiated a highly successful programme to help her to use touch as a way of making contact with the outside world. Within weeks she was exploring her environment with her hands, and within a few months she was modelling in clay. Sachs reports that

She started to model heads and figures, and within a year was locally famous as a blind sculptress. Her sculptures tended to be half or three quarters life size, with simple but recognizable features, and with a remarkably expressive energy. For me, for her, for all of us, this was a deeply moving, an amazing, almost a miraculous, experience.

The parallels with learner training are too good to miss. It is easy to see the parallel between the parents and nurses who prevented Madeline from developing the use of her hands and the over protective teacher who prevents his learners from developing or expressing responsibility for their own learning. It is tempting to point to the analogy between Madeline's flowering as a sculptress through learning to use her hands, and the potential effects of learner training in language learning.

What is learner training, and how does it fit in with the theme of Autonomy and Individualization? Thirteen years ago I suggested that 'we teach advanced students some of those techniques we, as teachers, use so that they can take a much more important part in directing their own learning' (Dickinson; 1974). This was in connection with my early explorations into self directed learning; and it has long been recognized that learners who are aiming for some measure of autonomy require preparation of various sorts i.e. learner training — see, for example, Holec (1981) and Dickinson (1987). More recently, two further movements have developed which advocate giving all language learners preparation for language learning. A recent development in modern language teaching (at least) in Britain is *language awareness training* (Hawkins 1984) which aims to heighten the learner's awareness about the nature of language, about the nature of communication and of the nature of language learning. The intended outcomes of these programmes include knowledge of a descriptive metalanguage; the realization that there is much in common between the learner's mother tongue and the target language; and a greater understanding and consciousness on the part of the learner of her own language learning processes.

The second movement — developed from the work of Naiman, Frolich, Stern and Todesco (1978) and Rubin (1981) — advocates the adoption of the additional objective in language learning of acquiring effective learning strategies. Proponents argue that at least one difference between good language learners and the rest is that good learners have developed more effective strategies. It may be the case, the argument goes, that if we were to train all learners in a selection of the strategies used by good learners then they would improve the efficiency of their learning. (See, for example, Rubin and Thomson 1983, Cohen and Apek 1981.)

This paper argues that learner training may be desirable for all learners, but that it is essential for those aiming at some level of autonomy. However, the term *learner training* is used to cover such a wide diversity of phenomena that it is difficult to assess whether it is a useful idea, and difficult to decide on appropriate objectives for a given learner or group. Consequently, in order to design appropriate programmes of training we teachers need a clearer idea of what learner training is, and

some framework within which to identify and develop objectives appropriate to our learners. I will argue that the term 'learner training' is useful and that it is appropriate that it should cover this diversity of phenomena, but in order to plan objectives for a programme of learner training it is necessary first to specify which learning modes will be used by the learner, and the language learning objectives aimed at. If then the actual learner training objectives are organized into sub-categories according to a notion of the level of planning or implementing a learning task, then learner training becomes a useful and workable idea for all learners.

Diversity within the current use of the term learner training

If one scans the recent literature on learner training and the closely-related area of learning strategies, one will see what a wide diversity of phenomena are covered. The term 'learner training' is used to describe training in things like the following.

1. Clarification/verification: The learner asks for examples of how to use a word or expression, asks for the correct form to use, etc. . . . (Rubin 1981).
2. Making judgements about how to learn a language, and about what language learning is like (Wenden 1983a,b).
3. Using gestures when you cannot think of how to say something (Ramirez 1986).
4. Self management: understanding the conditions that help one learn and arranging for the presence of those conditions (O'Malley et al 1985).
5. Memorising words through grouping them according to the similarity of their endings (Cohen and Aphek 1981).
6. Learning how to organize self and peer assessment of written composition (Dickinson 1987).
7. Learning that language has several different functions — e.g. for description, for negotiation and for self expression (Crookall 1984).

You can see from this short list that the term 'learner training' is so broad that one might query whether we aren't really talking about the totality of language learning. Well actually, of course we are, at least in so far as we are concerned with autonomous language learning. The problem, then, is not that learner training covers the totality of language learning, but that the same term is used to cover the training necessary for learners aiming at autonomy, and for the training desirable for those who intend to remain firmly within the context of conventional classroom instruction. 'Learner training' is used for both. The solution may be to retain the term for the broad idea, but to identify sub-categories so that we can specify appropriate objectives in learner training. We thus need a definition and a framework for sub-categorizing.

Towards a definition of learner training

Let me begin by working towards a definition of learner training. I can

identify three necessary components, and will look in some detail at the first two:

- training in processes, strategies and activities which can be used for language learning;
- instruction designed to heighten awareness of the nature of the target language, and instruction in a descriptive metalanguage;
- instruction in aspects of the theory of language learning and language acquisition.

Processes, Strategies and Activities Within Learner Training

So far as the processes, strategies and activities are concerned, I take it that, first, these are self-instructional in the sense that they are used by the learner without her being told to use them by a teacher, and without their use being supervised by a teacher. Secondly, I take it that such processes strategies and activities might be used by a learner both when she is learning in an autonomous mode and when she is learning in the context of a conventional classroom. The phrase 'learning in an autonomous mode' allows me to focus on those occasions when the learner is undertaking responsibility for her own learning outside the structure of the organized lesson. Thus, this might include *full autonomy* at one end of the scale, *self access work* somewhere in the middle, and *homework exercises* at the other end. Of course self instruction also takes place within the structure of the organized lesson, sometimes with the encouragement of the teacher — as in group and pair work, but also at times when the teacher might not be aware of it, as when a learner may be pursuing a personal (though legitimate) objective; for example practising pronunciation in a lesson where the objective is reading for meaning. It may be helpful, therefore, to recognize two 'scales' of self-instruction — the first as perceived by the teacher and the second as experienced by the learner.

The first scale, then, is concerned with the teacher's perception of the learning process which can be described in terms of the increasing degrees of freedom that the teacher allows the learners. This scale includes at the one end activities in the classroom where for a brief period the teacher gives freedom to the learners to engage in some learning task, and at the other end full autonomy. The second scale is concerned with learning, and with the learners, who may be engaged in aspects of self instruction throughout the most teacher centred lesson, quite independently of what the teacher may wish to be going on or maybe thinks is going on. These two scales would converge at full autonomy. (See, for further discussion of this, Allwright — this volume.)

The first part of the definition we are seeking might be phrased as

Training in all those self-instructional processes, strategies, and activities which may be used in autonomous learning or in a conventional classroom.

There is one further refinement to this — whether such processes etc. are consciously applied or not. I do not have time for a full discussion

of this, however there may be a case for arguing that conscious application is *potential* rather than *critical* in defining these phenomena. In situations of *language use*, learning strategies may be conscious by definition. Brown (1980) compares cognitive processes in a fluent reader with operating on 'automatic pilot'. This process continues until a 'triggering event' alerts the reader to a comprehension failure. This then activates a 'de-bugging' device which is utilized to overcome the failure. '... in the process of disambiguation and clarification we enter into a deliberate, planful strategic state that is quite distinct from the automatic pilot state in which we are not actively at work on de-bugging activities.' (page 455)

However, during skill-getting activities, practised learners may utilize a range of strategies — such as repetition and rehearsal — without deliberately and consciously calling them into play. So let us refine the definition into

Training in all those (potentially conscious) self-instructional processes, strategies, and activities which may be used in autonomous learning or in a conventional classroom.

Language Awareness Training

The second part of the definition is concerned with language awareness and awareness of language learning. There is no space to go into detail on the justification for these in some programmes of learner training, but let me give one or two pointers. Learners — especially but not exclusively those working in an autonomous mode — need some idea of the likely 'surrender value' of particular processes they may choose to adopt. In other words, if, as a learner, my aim is to develop an ability to make appointments by telephone, and I have a choice of communicative and structural materials, I need to have some idea of the value or otherwise of structural drills in terms of my aim. Similarly, if I wish to use a grammar book to check on some particular syntactic or morphological structure, then I need to know quite a lot about the description of the target language in order to understand the book and make use of the information.

The definition might be adapted then, to include these possibilities:

Training in all those (potentially conscious) self-instructional processes, strategies, and activities which may be used in autonomous learning or in a conventional classroom; and instruction aimed to heighten the learner's awareness of language and of the process of language learning.

Learner training, then, covers a wide range of possibilities from learning strategies concerned with a detailed skill to general dispositions for learning. Though this term is used in only a minority of the sources I quoted from above, their proposals fit in with my definition.

Sub-categorization of learner training

Let us now consider a proposed framework for the sub-categorization of learner training. Such a framework is necessary if we wish to be in a

position to design programmes of learner training for learners in or intending to enter different modes of language learning. The framework I am proposing is intended to provide a principled way of selecting objectives for learners working in different modes.

What help do we get from the literature? There have been several proposals for refining the notions of *learner* and *learning* strategies. For example, Faerch and Kaspar (1983) distinguish between learning processes and learning strategies, and Ellis (1986) makes a similar distinction, and explores differences in learning strategies. Carver (1984) proposes a model of learner methodology which distinguishes learning styles, work habits, plans and strategies, whilst O'Malley et al (1985) distinguish metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and socio-affective strategies. These are all useful in our task of sub-categorization, but all are limited in that they do not make a sufficient differentiation of mode of learning. An essential ingredient in any framework from our point of view is the distinction between preparation for self-instruction in the context of autonomy and preparation for self-instruction in the context of conventional classroom instruction.

A second useful source of ideas is the literature in Educational Psychology in the general area of metacognition. The idea of 'learner training' in the sense of making learners aware of their own and alternative learning strategies in order to improve efficiency of learning is, of course, not restricted to language learning. A recent book by Nisbet and Shucksmith — *Learner Strategies* — (1986) suggests that training 10 to 14 year old schoolchildren in effective strategies for learning will increase learning efficiency in later school study. Nisbet and Shucksmith's work is greatly influenced by the work of the American psychologist Flavell and his associates which is concerned with the area of *metacognition*. Metacognition is being aware — or becoming aware — of one's own learning processes and strategies. A simplification of the argument is that it is necessary for a learner to be or become aware of her own learning strategies if they are to be improved. Consciousness allows one to analyse processes/strategies and to distinguish those which are effective from those which are not so effective, which in turn enables one to retain the effective ones and replace the ineffective ones. That is the theory. However, one finding from research within metamemory — a sub-section of metacognition — suggests that training in memory strategies may not lead to improvement in memory performance — that the learner with an impressive array of strategies and the flexibility to use them might perform worse than another learner with a single strategy!

Framework for Identifying Objectives for Learner Training

I would like, then, to propose a three dimensional framework for identifying and refining objectives for learner training. The three dimensions are:

Intended learning mode in which self instruction will operate (e.g. conventional classroom; self-access learning; individualized instruction; autonomy)

Learning focus (e.g. skill learning; communication practice; real use)

Planning (or strategic) level (e.g. approach to learning; learning plans; techniques of learning)

1.1 *Intended learning mode* The first dimension of the framework — intended learning mode — will include at least learning in the conventional classroom, and learning autonomously; it may also be useful to recognize self-access learning and perhaps individualized learning related to classroom instruction. Choices at this level will constrain the choices necessary or appropriate at the planning (or strategic) level. It could be argued that all learners would benefit from training in good learning strategies; however, those preparing for autonomy require — in addition to these good learning strategies abilities in several other areas which in a conventional classroom context will be the responsibility of the teacher. An example might be the selection of appropriate learning materials.

1.2 *Learning focus* The second dimension of the framework — learning focus — merely lists the specific learning goals of the learner or learners one is concerned with. These may include language skill objectives, objectives concerned with communicative competence, and perhaps ‘specific purpose’ objectives. I have little further to say about this since it is our stock in trade to draw up a set of learning objectives for our customers. Once again, choices made here will affect the choices of actual objectives made in the third area.

1.3 *Planning level* It is within the dimension of *Planning (or Strategic) Level* that the actual decisions about learner training objectives are made. Decisions made within the first two dimensions guide and constrain the selection of or objectives from this dimension in reasonably obvious ways.

Planning Level might be divided into three sub-sections:

- Approach to learning
- Learning plans
- Learning techniques.

‘Approach to learning’ is concerned with high level goals which are not language learning specific. These might include the ability to diagnose one’s own learning needs, the ability to translate these into objectives; the ability to allocate and organise time for learning.

The second sub-section is ‘Learning plans’, which Nisbet and Shucksmith define as ‘Superordinate skills, generalized procedures or sequences of activities with a conscious purpose’. Examples of these might include the ability to use course materials (in a self-instructional mode)

to help attain language learning objectives, the ability to undertake self-assessment; the ability to use reference materials — dictionaries, grammars and so on; and the ability to use human resources for furthering the attainment of objectives — the teacher, fellow students, informants, and so on.

The third sub-section is 'Learning techniques', which would include a wide range of 'strategies' and techniques appropriate for different kinds of language learning tasks. Examples include

- repetition — imitating a language model, including overt practice and silent rehearsal.
- deduction — consciously applying rules to produce or understand the target language.
- recombination — constructing a meaningful sentence — by combining known elements in a new way.
- inferencing — using available information to guess meanings of new items, predict outcomes or fill in missing information.

Conclusion: implementation of learner training

Finally, we are faced with the question of how such a programme of learner training might be implemented. This is beyond the scope of the present paper, but let me touch on two questions: can learners — especially those with very specific purposes and a short time in which to achieve them — really undertake such a programme of training, and secondly, what is the teacher's role in this?

The answers to these questions are obviously linked in various ways. However, to take them one by one. The ideal conditions for implementing such a programme as this is to build the implementation into language teaching programmes. Those beginning at school level may have more time available than those concerned with intensive ESP programmes — but even within such programmes there are opportunities. Of course some learners (maybe most learners) like some teachers are untrained in that they have not been through an explicit course of training. However, they still adopt learning plans and techniques. These, I suspect, are largely adopted from language classrooms and language teaching materials — and other techniques are transferred from other learning experiences. Consequently, my argument goes, teachers are involved willy-nilly in learner training, though many may not be conscious of it. Thus when the teacher uses particular techniques in the classroom these may be seen as endorsed as appropriate learning techniques. Similarly teachers tell students to undertake specific learning tasks in particular ways. Finally, teachers get involved in quite explicit learner training in such areas as strategies for dealing with vocabulary, e.g. 'Do not use a dictionary as a first resort', and 'try guessing the meaning of the word first'.

What is required then is a heightened awareness of learner training among teachers, and a more conscious and deliberate approach to it so

that the learning abilities and skills that a learner ends up with are appropriate to her needs.

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Autonomy and Individualization in Language Learning: Institutional Implications

Learner needs v institutional constraints— can individualized learning fill a gap?

Jenny Pugsley

British Council

Introduction

The cultural and pedagogic implications of individualized language learning programmes are explored elsewhere in detail.

The British Council as administrator of many overseas students' language training programmes in the UK has to reconcile the pedagogic needs of the study fellows, as far as they can be ascertained, with a number of other factors: firstly, the main training institutions' requirements; secondly, the terms of the award granted to the study fellow; thirdly, the conditions imposed by the study fellow's employer — for how long can they be released for English language tuition? Is it usual to test, and therefore assess for ELT, study fellows coming from that particular country? Fourthly, simple practical constraints such as obtaining an exit visa, a medical report, etc. So, even were it possible to gauge the pedagogic needs of study fellows in terms of level and specialism, other factors would work against the grouping of incoming students on purely pedagogic grounds.

While most institutions agree that a monthly-based modular structure for the pre-sessionals is preferable to weekly entry, such time-tabling is frequently impossible. It follows that the group on any one English course will have diverse needs and backgrounds; while pedagogy and forward planning make a central core component to the course essential, individualized programmes will play a crucial role.

Given that course planners know that they will be planning for diversity, how far can they plan, and how far adapt to the particular individuals that arrive? Given the development in recent years of many new English tuition centres, the main priority would not seem to be to send study fellows for English tuition to their future main training institution. If that alone is the common factor shared by the student group, it may be that a pre-sessionals course needs eventually to develop into a highly autonomous programme for all its students. This assumes, of

course, that such an approach is both understood and accepted by students.

The body of British Council-administered overseas study fellows training in the UK constitutes approximately 20 per cent of the total number in the UK during an academic year (some 10,000 out of a total of 56,000 during 1985/86). The interest generated by those students perhaps exceeds their importance in terms of numbers alone, given that their training is usually related to a sizeable overseas project or a government-to-government training scheme; the Council, moreover, and language training institutions, public and private sector, maintain close links where possible to ensure that each benefits from the experience of the other, the Council for the purpose of advising candidates and sponsors on language training and requirements, and institutions for the purposes of providing appropriate courses.

Over the past twelve years overseas study fellows seem to have become significantly more articulate about their own linguistic needs and wants. Also, more main academic tutors are being asked to voice their opinions on the subject of English language competence. Are we moving away from the assumption that all linguistic problems were the students' responsibility and not the lecturers'? Study skills at an advanced level are recognized as a discrete and respectable area of language development in their own right. Developments in EFL/ESL mean that we have a vast range of resources, human and material, at our disposal; yet there are still numerous constraints affecting the preparation of language training programmes, apart from the pedagogic ones that have been discussed elsewhere. Some of these are inherent in any large scheme that is complex to administer efficiently and fairly; others are related to diminishing budgets. Where funding is not actually cut, all expenditure is monitored with increasing parsimony.

I would like therefore to outline those aspects of the work of the English Tuition Co-ordination Unit that relate to study fellows' language programmes, particularly in terms of the conflicting interests that have to be satisfied; I will then touch briefly on two areas of interest that have surfaced during our work, and during my research. This research took the form of a small project in which fifteen non-native speaker students across three British universities were interviewed together with their academic and language tutors; the object was to investigate the relationship between students' perceptions of their linguistic needs and the perceptions held by their various tutors. It was hoped that in considering needs from three distinct vantage points, and in consequence the institutional relationship between the three individuals in each case study, some indication would be given as to ways in which course structure, language training and assessment procedures might be adapted to help the students in their language development process and consequently whole programme of study.

The work of the unit

1. *Structure and location of the English Tuition Co-ordination Unit*

The Unit is responsible for assessing study fellows' linguistic requirements in terms of pre- and in-sessional training, and placing them as appropriate according to criteria agreed with other Council colleagues, and language teaching colleagues in institutions of higher and further education.

2. *Functions of the Unit*

I have categorized the Unit's functions under five headings:

- (a) To assess language training requirements in terms of length of training and location:

This is done for all study fellows studying or training in the UK under British Council auspices. Approximately 75 per cent of these are funded by the Overseas Development Administration through the Council's Technical Co-operation Training Scheme; the remainder are administered by the Fellows and scholars Department and funded by a variety of schemes — Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Commonwealth awards, overseas governments or employers, etc. In 1985-86 there were some 10,000 TC study fellows training in the UK, of whom 4,460 were new arrivals; out of this last figure some 1,400 needed ELT.

The Unit assesses some 2,800 applications annually. This figure does *not* include applications from those countries where English is deemed to be a second language to such an extent that the English Language Testing Service test is not considered necessary, and it is assumed — though with increasing reservations — that language levels and study skills will be up to the required standard.

The Unit reviews, via application papers, the student's previous academic and professional experience, and English-learning history as related to both. English Language Testing Service (ELTS) test scores are considered — not the overall band score but the full profile. The Unit considers the linguistic demands of future training in terms of formal (ELTS) entry requirements and what is known of actual demands to be made on study fellows: all BC study fellows are going on to academic training — short courses, full (usually PG) degree courses, research attachments — *and/or* training/industrial attachments; some will undertake peripatetic programmes. Each application is considered a minimum of twice. First, it is seen when the application has reached this country with the approval and support of the Council's overseas Representative and the overseas Ministry, and initial approval in terms of the particular criteria relating to that award scheme. At this stage the nature, level and location of main training has been recommended, but no approaches to any institution have been made. The application is considered again when main training has been finalized, but prior to an official offer being

made. If there is any dispute as to the ELT recommendation, the case is reviewed again as often as necessary. Any recommended language training that exceeds the basic levels agreed with the Overseas Development Administration requires their special approval. For example, a candidate undertaking nine months' main training or longer may automatically receive twelve weeks' language training, but no more without a special case being put forward.

Institutions will be familiar with the published list of *entry requirements* for levels of language competence. In practice receiving departments are often flexible with regard to these; moreover, different subjects at different levels require different levels of linguistic skills: since the full profile of the test result is considered, proper weight can be given, for example, to the writing component where main training calls for extended academic writing by way of assessment.

It is not normal for study fellows to be re-tested after language training; main training institutions usually declare themselves satisfied if the candidate completes pre-course English Language Training as specified by the Council. In the case of those medical trainees, however, who require limited registration with the General Medical Council, the British Council's medical department has the authority to recommend exemption from part of the PLAB test providing that the candidate achieves an overall band score of 7.0 on the ELTS *re-test*. Some universities are now insisting in their offer letters that study fellows achieve particular scores on a re-test following language tuition: it is usually the case that British Council study fellows are exempted from this, but it would be useful if language tutors could liaise with their colleagues in the various academic departments to ensure that unnecessary stipulations do not appear in formal offer letters. The ELTS test is referred to again below.

- (b) To place study fellows at appropriate language training institutions in the private and public sector:

The Unit briefs institutions on language requirements where possible.

Study fellows will normally be sent to their main training institutions for language training where appropriate facilities exist. Where they do not, study fellows will be sent to an appropriate centre in a public or private sector institution. A number of British Council Recognized private schools offer the kind of academic and welfare facilities we require for our type of study fellows, i.e. usually mature, professional people, frequently from developing countries and therefore very different cultural backgrounds, with a specific purpose for learning or developing English language skills, and limited time in which to do it. In addition to well qualified and experienced staff, and good course planning, strong support in matters pastoral and social is considered essential, and an appropriate mix in that institution's student population at the time of placing Council students.

(c) To monitor study fellows' linguistic performance:

The objective is to identify those study fellows still needing, and likely to benefit from, in-session ELT, either as private tuition or in-session classes, and predict those cases where severe difficulties, and possible academic failure, will occur.

The Council is answerable to study fellows' sponsors in this regard. Monitoring is carried out by means of the questionnaire provided by ETCU at the end of English language training; and by the TVF1 and TVF2 forms issued as an integral part of the ELTS testing scheme:

- TVF1 — this is sent to language training institutions for the tutor to complete and return to ETCU after pre-course ELT
- TVF2 — this is sent to main training institutions for main tutor to complete and return to ETCU one month into main training.

Where comments on the TVF2 form indicate that a study fellow is not coping with his or her studies linguistically, written confirmation of this is obtained from the tutor. On the basis of these procedures it would seem that the percentage of study fellows requiring in-session ELT is increasing. There will be many reasons for this. It may be partly due to the declining standards of English, and English teaching, in certain parts of the world; it is partly due to the broader range of study fellows that are invited to this country for training; it may also be due to the fact that students and tutors are articulating their views on these problems more frequently.

Academic tutors will undoubtedly vary in the degree to which they demand native speaker competence in oral and written English from their students. What is sometimes viewed as the operation of double standards in terms of linguistic proficiency may also be seen as permissible leeway where a student has demonstrated factual knowledge and critical judgement albeit expressed in inadequate English or in an inappropriate register. Do we have confidence in those who make the distinction between good content, poorly expressed, and content that is inaccurate, uncritical and poorly expressed? If so, to what extent does the language tutor need to set their students' target levels at 'native speaker' competence?

Are language tutors sufficiently explicit on these points to study fellows during their language training? Are academic tutors sufficiently explicit on the principles underlying the differentiation between 'own' and 'others' opinions?

(d) To monitor in-country (local, overseas) ELT:

A number of British Council study fellows take ELT overseas in the Council teaching centres (DTEOs) in addition to that done in the UK. One of the aims in setting up these centres was to widen the range of study fellows offered awards to include those who were academically sound and professionally suitable, but inadequate in terms of English

language skills. Because of the limitations referred to previously on the length of ELT that the various schemes will fund, many very suitable candidates would have had to be rejected without local ELT. We retain a broad overview of study fellows following such courses.

One interesting development from this has been that many of the study fellows who have followed such courses now arrive in the UK already familiar with some current textbooks and much of contemporary methodology, a fact which may pre-empt some UK language tutors in their choice of materials, or learning activities.

(e) To liaise with language training institutions:

It is essential that the Unit maintains personal contact with the language institutions, as far as time and staffing allow. The opportunity to discuss likely training programmes is greatly valued: given the number of occasions on which language training has to be justified to sponsors, it is essential that one can lay claim to first-hand knowledge of the contacts.

3. Some problems arising

Administrative procedures have been discussed at some length to give an idea of the many factors that may prevent more detailed planning than is possible at present regarding students arriving for pre-sessional English. It is because of the complexity of the placing operation that one needs continually to ask language tutors and planners to be as flexible as possible in their own pre-sessional/in-sessional course planning. These points may also be useful in their consideration of autonomous learning projects.

(a) Administrative constraints:

As indicated above, there are restrictions on the length of English language training permitted for each study fellow. Additionally, study fellows have to be fully occupied when in this country and therefore cannot wait until the next start date of, for example, a four-week module of a pre-sessional training programme; aid funding in this sector is limited, and has to be tightly stretched; a little overspending on each of ten awards, for example, means possibly one less study fellow is able to undertake training. Late arrivals due to delayed exit procedures, sickness, delayed release from employment, local conditions etc. also interface with course planning.

Many applications for the next academic year do not arrive in this country until after Easter: there is therefore a vast accumulation of assessing and placing to be done during the summer period. The number of awards given to any one country, and its related budget, are negotiated in advance between the Overseas Development Administration, the British Council Representative overseas and the overseas Ministry.

(b) Attitudes:

Other constraints stem from the attitudes of a number of colleagues at

home and overseas who do not view language training as a priority to the extent that language tutors and language programme administrators may do. The language training component may well be seen as the first item to be trimmed in the event of funding being reduced. Regular feedback from language tutors and their academic colleagues will lend support to the view that good language training is the essential cornerstone of any training programme, without which time, money, and personal resources are wasted.

4. Areas of special interest

I will add a brief comment on three aspects of language training that seem to be relevant to the overall theme:

(a) Perceptions:

There is an (unsurprising) discrepancy between study fellows' *perceptions* of their language-related problems, and their tutors' perceptions of the same (and I am referring to both language and main tutors). This seems to be linked to a difference of viewpoint as to what constitute the essential language/study skills required for various academic courses, and what, in fact, are the particular skills that students have been practising during pre-sessional training. It seems that study fellows are frequently quite articulate about their own language problems and are perhaps better aware than their tutors of the learning process that spans numerous activities and sub-skills. The succession of skills involved in proceeding through lecture, seminar, private study through to formal output, e.g. seminar presentation, essay etc. is, obviously, complex. While the study fellows may not consciously make the connection between the various stages, only they will be able to identify the problem, linguistic or otherwise, that occurred throughout the process. Assessing their own output against a norm is not necessarily a new experience: many, if not most, have intricate English learning histories of their own, whether from an ESL or an EFL context; it is simply the norm that may be unfamiliar. Their own perceptions of their learning experience might usefully contribute towards the design of language programmes, particularly in the area of autonomous learning.

The relationship between student and language tutor is, of course, greatly valued. However sympathetic the academic tutor, their relationship with the student will inevitably be tempered by their relative roles as assessor and assessee. Basic educational qualifications — whether A-levels (or a first degree) or other forms of matriculation — are obviously no guarantee of good oral or written skills (for either native or non-native speakers). One could hope that in a more prosperous era all but the most obviously proficient of non-native speakers could undertake a period of training in communication skills. In the meantime, those making the case for language training will have to put forward a well-evidenced argument to a possibly unsympathetic sponsor.

(b) Extended academic writing:

The area in which non-native speakers seem most unaware (or made least aware) of the inadequacy of their linguistic output is perhaps the piece of extended academic writing: tutors may be critical of the students' lack of organization of material, and apparent disregard for differentiation between straightforward plagiarism, disguised plagiarism, relating of other writers' views without critical comment, and expression of own personal views.

While many of these criticisms are not unjustified, the critics would seem to be presuming a single 'correct' approach to the concept of ownership of the written word and the 'possessability' of text — a concept which in our own society is surely founded not only on a philosophical and linguistic basis, but against the highly structured background of the publishing world, on the one hand, and the attainment of academic status through one's publications, on the other.

Moreover, where a one-year PG course is so structured that no major piece of written work is required before well into the spring term, the student and their tutors have little opportunity to identify the language problem and remedy it. This is an area in which tutors might think of re-structuring teacher's input and student's output to allow the non-native speaker to demonstrate their active linguistic skills, or lack of them.

(c) Changing patterns of linguistic competence:

In a number of countries overseas, the nature of English teaching, and levels of competence, are changing, and hence (or because) the status of English is changing also. This is quite apart from the individual student's personal strengths and weaknesses. The different types of ESL and EFL learners (both terms to be defined) have distinct and sometimes contradicting requirements; for many learners from a country where English is no longer the second language to the degree or in the contexts that it once was, it is difficult for these learners to perceive their linguistic problems in terms of error or inadequacy. Where a student has total 'fluency' in a regional variety of English, the teacher will need to use different strategies to develop their language skills to conform to a British social or academic context. It may be that administrators will need to present such language training as a product different to that for the learner for whom English is wholly a foreign language. This, of course, presumes that we set the same target levels of competence (including appropriacy of register) for all non-native speakers regardless of their own linguistic patterns: is this a fair and feasible objective in the light of what has been said elsewhere regarding the imposition of one's own cultural norms on the foreign learner? Distinctions in any types of training, and presumably also language training, based apparently on ethnic or national differences, would possibly be received with mistrust and risk accusations of discrimination: there may increasingly be situations, however, in which just such a distinction is necessary.

Syllabus Negotiation: The Basis of Learner Autonomy

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Introduction: self-directed learning

Holec (1980) wrote that:

In self-directed learning . . . the knowledge to be acquired is defined by the learner (or group of learners) on the basis of his (or their) communicative aims alone, without reference to the complete range of competence of the native speaker or to the needs of other learners.

In so saying, Holec, in effect, puts self-directed learning clearly within the Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) framework, rejecting the 'common core' approach to syllabus design (see also Bloor and Bloor 1986) as well as all criteria for measuring success or failure which are independent of the individual learner. His vision of self-directed learning differs, however, from the classic LSP position, which constructs the syllabus on the basis of needs which are defined from the target situation, (see, for example, Munby 1978, Richterich and Chancerel, 1980), because Holec places the definition of the syllabus directly in the hands of the learner.

Holec's examples are of learners who seem to possess clearly defined occupational linguistic goals ('writing business letters', for example), but in our experience, very few learners in the academic context, embark on a course of study with a clear understanding of how to define the knowledge that they hope or expect to acquire. Allwright (1982) too reports that learners are often 'unclear' about what they want from their studies.

This paper discusses one approach to helping students arrive at the position of being able to understand and articulate their language learning objectives.

Syllabus negotiation

The approach discussed is known as 'syllabus negotiation' (NCLE 1980, page 7). In what follows, we briefly discuss the pros and cons for syllabus negotiation in general and go on to consider the differing characteristics of

one-to-one negotiation on the one hand and negotiation with a group on the other.

Our comments are based on our experiences in the universities of Aston and Warwick. At Aston, the work took place from 1980 to 1985 with students who chose to study language as a Complementary Studies option, within which students had a relatively large amount of personal freedom. At Warwick, 1985-1987, the work was with students who had signed up for a taught course in Academic Writing.

The term 'negotiation' carries connotations that are not entirely compatible with an enlightened liberal humanist approach to student-teacher relations; connotations of opposed interests as in employer-trades union wage negotiations or US-USSR arms control negotiations. The suggestion that teachers and students are in a confrontational relationship of this type is one that we would wish to reject, but the term 'negotiation' remains appropriate because what we have in mind does involve two parties (teacher and student(s)) attempting to establish a consensus regarding what is wanted and what is attainable. Syllabus negotiation is unlike its counterparts in the world of industrial or international politics because there should be no conflict between the goals of the two parties, the teacher's aim being to achieve what is best for the students. There may be a discrepancy between what teachers perceive to be possible and what students perceive to be possible, but they always have shared interests.

Thus it is not a bargaining process that is involved here but a joint exploration of possibilities and targets, an exploration to which the two parties bring different specialist knowledge. By 'negotiation' we mean a process of reaching agreement through discussion, and by 'syllabus' we mean some sort of inventory of objectives.

Arguments against negotiation

There are good reasons for *not* negotiating syllabuses.

It is easier to produce a well-planned, neatly packaged programme if you decide well in advance of the arrival of the students exactly what is to be studied and where and when and how it is to be presented. Universities, with their complex apparatus for the initiation of courses are not the most congenial settings for on-the-spot decisions regarding course content. Fortunately, ESP courses do not usually have to run the gauntlet of degree committees and senate vetting, but the fact remains that detailed prescription well in advance of day one of the course is in line with general university practice.

It may also be seen as being in conflict with the well-established principle of needs analysis. Analysis of the learners' target needs is, in fact, the basis of ESP course design as defined by Munby (1978):

ESP courses are those where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learner.

In syllabus negotiation, one either abandons the 'prior analysis' in favour of mere discussion or the analysis is presented to the students for discussion and possible demolition. We would favour the second approach, in the awareness that some of the needs may be 'negotiated out'. Often, of course, the needs are in any case too numerous to be covered and the students can play an important part in establishing priorities.

Arguments for negotiation

One reason for negotiating a syllabus is that it is the only way to take into account the *wants* of the students. As has been well-documented (by, for example, Mead 1980 and Hutchinson and Waters 1987, pages 56-58) 'wants' are not the same thing as 'needs'. The analysis of the target situation and the resulting inventory of needs can be arrived at without recourse to the students' own wishes and dreams, or their perceptions of their own strengths and weaknesses. Hutchinson and Waters have reminded us that 'What distinguishes an ESP course from a General English course is not the *existence* of a need as such but rather an *awareness* of the need'. Certainly, it may be the case that the teacher/counsellor has a responsibility to help the learners to the state of awareness whereby they can perceive their needs as their wants. This can be attempted within the framework of a negotiating process.

Which brings us to a second reason (not quite separable from the first) namely *motivation*. The process of negotiation enables the students to express their wants and to argue for them, in many instances successfully. If the process is effective it may also be the case that non-viable wants will be replaced with viable ones. A course based on such a process is more motivating than one which is imposed on the students by diktat.

It is a well-known feature of optional courses in ESP (like optional courses in anything from motor cycle maintenance to Zen-Buddhism) that there is a high drop out rate. One reason for this is that students do not perceive the course as solving their problems. Negotiation can help to counter this, particularly as it cannot be a once-and-for-all process.

One of the features of syllabus negotiation is that once the process of two way discussion has been established, it will not go away. It involves a complete reformulation of the interaction roles normally assumed in the teacher-student relationship whereby the sole initiator of discussion about classroom decisions is the teacher. Once this authoritarian pattern has been undermined, negotiation inevitably recurs as the course proceeds, and, if the students want changes, they are likely to give voice to their views. This can motivate the students to continued involvement in the course. In our experience, students are much more likely to come and explain absences and also to discuss leaving the course when they feel that their needs have been satisfied.

The third, and, in our opinion, the most important reason for syllabus negotiation, is the fact that it encourages the students to take much more *responsibility* for their own learning. Advocates of autonomy (e.g. Riley, 1976) self-directed learning (Dickinson, 1978, Carver, 1984) and, to a

lesser extent, assisted self-tutoring (Ager et al 1980, T. Bloor forthcoming) have for some years argued for the desirability of weaning students away from their dependence on the institution, of making them independent learners, able to exploit their general environment to the full in order to control their own learning programmes. Whether it be with an individual in a self access programme or with a group of students on a conventionally taught course, negotiating the syllabus is the first step towards full responsibility.

Anarchy of expectations

Drobnic (1978) referred to 'the anarchy of expectations' present in many ESP classrooms, and this picturesque phrase captures precisely the state of affairs recognizable in most pre-sessional and other service English classes in British universities. Expectations differ not only with respect to the content of courses, but also with respect to teaching/learning styles and the amount of work individuals are prepared to undertake.

It has been argued, with reason, that one of the jobs of the ESP teacher is to suppress such anarchic tendencies and to train the learners not only in the use of the language but also in the ways of the world, or rather the ways of the great British classroom. There is some sense in this point of view in so far as our classes are preparation for coping in other university departments, but we may find it easier to achieve this aim when we first understand more accurately what those varied expectations consist of and how far each learner will need to adapt and adjust, not only to the British educational context but also to their fellow students.

With regard to the possible options for the course, there can be considerable difference between the students' (several and collective) understanding and the teacher's understanding. It is often the case that while the students' expectations of progress in the language are extremely ambitious, their perceptions of possible options for classroom activity are extremely limited. Many see themselves as operating in a passive role, just 'being taught', and see the teacher as the active member of the partnership. Most students are surprised by the initial requirement that they express their views about the course. When we want to encourage students to see themselves in a more controlling role as learners, attempts at syllabus negotiation can prove productive simply because they provide an opportunity for the options to be investigated.

Individual study programmes

Nevertheless, the most likely place for successful syllabus negotiation to take place is with learners and their counsellors on individual study programmes, also known as 'self-access' language study. One to one negotiation can be concerned with establishing the most basic dimensions of the course, thereby bringing the learner face to face with what language learning is all about. As we see it, there are, in broad terms, three major dimensions that can be negotiated for self-access learning. The first two

will be seen to bear a close resemblance to the dimensions usually discussed under 'needs analysis', but the third is a matter of individual learning style.

1. Aspects of language use
 - (a) Skills required (e.g. listening, academic writing);
 - (b) Target situations (e.g. lecture theatre, examination);
 - (c) Fields of interest (e.g. ophthalmic optics, industry);
 - (d) Genres required (e.g. lab reports, seminar presentations).
2. Levels of competence aspired to.
3. Preferred study modes.

Hence, we can argue that the learner in the self-access mode can be involved from the very beginning in making decisions about both *what* he or she is to learn and *how* he or she is to learn it.

A successful approach tried at Aston University began with the distribution of a short questionnaire to participating students. This questionnaire was very brief and consisted of an information card that was filed as a record of each student's initial contact.

This was followed by a structured interview, known as a 'consultation' in order to avoid the unfortunate associations of 'interview' with selection procedures. The term 'consultation' also helped to give the learner the status of client, which we hoped would establish an expectation of active participation.

The initial consultation took place with the counsellor on a one to one basis. Because of the inevitable shortage of time, some structuring of the interview was essential. The best approach seemed to be to provide the students in advance with a preview of the type of questions that would be discussed by issuing them with an information sheet (see facing page).

The individual consultation

In some respects, as others have observed, advising language learners is analogous to the psychotherapy counselling session where the counsellor tries to help the client express his or her own perceptions of a problem (Curran 1976, La Forge 1983), though comparisons are a wee bit odious here since it is more than a little misleading to view the language learner as a pathological case.¹ The valid aspect of the analogy is that, just as the psychotherapy client may not know exactly what his problems are, so many students have little in the way of clearly defined views about what they want from the course.

Once our learners had voiced their objectives, however, they often needed guidance in the amount of time required to achieve them. We found that a major part of the consultation involved guiding the student to understand what achievements were possible in the time available.

There were some, however, who came to the negotiation with very clearly defined views on what they wanted to achieve and how they wanted to set about it. Sometimes, misled by commercial companies'

COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES : LANGUAGE OPTION

Please attend for an appointment with your consultant at the following time _____ on _____.

Your course of study of _____ will be planned to suit your needs and learning style as far as possible. Your consultant will help you to establish your objectives, your priorities and your deadlines.

During your first consultation, you might like to tell the tutor your answers to some of the following questions:

1. Why did you choose to study this language?
2. In what situations do you expect to use the language?
3. Are you mostly interested in the spoken or written language?
4. How do you like to work?
on your own
in a small group
in a taught class
5. What kind of learning materials do you like?
a textbook
'real' magazines, leaflets, books, journals
video
audio cassettes
6. Do you wish to take any exams? Do you want regular progress tests?
7. Do you have any special problems or strengths with regard to language learning?

advertising ('Speak French in thirty hours') or by faith in CALL and language lab techniques, students were unrealistically ambitious. This position was typified by a senior (British) finance officer of a government for which we once worked who claimed that language learning in school was 'uneconomical' since you could teach an adult any language he needed to know by 'plugging him into a language lab for a few hours'.

However, such over-confidence is somewhat unusual. Much of our one-to-one experience has been with native English speakers learning other languages, and it is a well-known fact that most native English speakers have a poor self-image as far as learning foreign languages is concerned. Self-doubt is not, however, unique to the English speaker, and part of any counsellor's task in negotiation is to help the student to feel confident that she/he is capable of achievement, and to establish reasonable, attainable goals.

As we have indicated, many, perhaps most, students came to the negotiation with an internalized model of learning that was incompatible with autonomy. They expected to be told what to do. Even though these students had chosen to register for a self-access/self-tutoring course, they seldom felt happy about making their own choice of materials or study modes, for example. We sometimes suggested to students that they should browse through the self-access materials available to see if there was a course that attracted them. This sometimes resulted in indignant reaction. One student said, 'I knew I was supposed to teach myself, but I expected to be told how to do it. I didn't expect to have to choose my own course.'

She was right to some extent, of course. The counsellor has a degree of expertise that the student lacks. Even if we assume, with Riley and his colleagues at CRAPEL, that our primary aim is to free the students from dependence on the institution, it is a weaning process that is called for. As we have said elsewhere, 'The trouble with dropping people in at the deep end is that some of them drown' (Bloor forthcoming); to paraphrase, dropping people in may cause dropping out.

Nevertheless, we found that it was possible to begin by discussing the aspects of language use that interested the individual: whether they were mainly interested in speaking or reading the language, for example; whether they wanted to use the language primarily for formal or informal situations; whether they had any immediate tasks to perform, like essay writing and so on. The second major area of importance was the learner's special subject field and academic objectives (MSc Engineering, for example). This was followed by a discussion of the skills they already possessed and which they wanted to improve. Long term goals above and beyond the period of study in the university also had to be discussed.

With the individual learner, the range of study modes was also fairly flexible, usually constrained only by what the institution could provide — though guidance on the exploitation of resources outside the institution is not ruled out, of course.

There was a wide range of difference between different learners as far

as their choice of venue was concerned: some much preferred to work at home, others in the library, others in a language lab. Similar variation existed with choice of materials — while some learners opted for innovative technology, others preferred to work through a traditional textbook.

Allowing considerable freedom in such matters (and freedom to change one's mind) encouraged the learners to make conscious decisions about the whole process of study. The commitment thus made was the first step to autonomous learning.

Things are very different for syllabus negotiation on taught courses.

Syllabus negotiation for taught courses

Bowers (1980) makes a plea for 'putting effort into the negotiation between teacher and students at the beginning of their relationship during which defined needs can be converted into *felt* needs'. This approach appears to see syllabus negotiation as a procedure for converting the students to the point where they can appreciate what the teacher/course designer already knows. This is suspiciously close to what we have called 'pseudo-negotiation' (T. Bloor, forthcoming), whereby the teacher elicits her predetermined items from the students. To be fair, Bowers is not arguing that we should try to delude; he also makes the point that the teacher benefits from the process of negotiation, a view which accords with our experience.

It is not possible to approach the negotiation of taught courses with the same degree of open-endedness that self-access learning permits but we must remain wary of the danger of foisting on students prepacked solutions merely *disguised* as negotiation.

But what are the limits and possibilities for negotiation on taught courses?

As far as 'Aspects of Language Use' are concerned there is little possibility for negotiation in the broad sense already discussed. The target situation and the skills required are usually pre-defined. Thus, in the case of the Academic Writing Course at the University of Warwick, the Target Skills and Situations (1a and 1b from the list on page 66) were established before the negotiation began, since the participants had already selected the course entitled Academic Writing from a choice of possible classes.

A free choice between various possible courses is probably an essential starting point for negotiation with taught classes. We have no experience with a completely open choice of syllabus with a whole class, but one can conceive of genuine chaos arising — where no-one in a class would agree on even the major course objective, with some groups shouting for 'listening', some for 'writing', others for 'spelling', and so on.

The central objective having been established, however, it is possible to present areas for negotiation at a more delicate level. This is precisely the opposite situation from negotiation with individuals about a syllabus

for self-tutoring. With the latter, the *broad objectives* are negotiated and the details of the course are usually determined by the content of published or pre-prepared course materials, but with the teacher controlled class, it is the *details* that can be negotiated.

Negotiating the writing course

The way this was approached at Warwick was to invite each student (in the first week of the course) to complete a questionnaire evaluating the seriousness of their own problems with respect to aspects of academic writing.

The broad areas presented for checking (and subsequently for discussion) were: organization of the text, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, handwriting, and presentation. Each of these sections had detailed sub-sections, which introduced some more subtle areas, but on the whole, the questionnaire focused on an assortment of strangely old-fashioned items. This is because it was based on previous experience of ESP students in Britain and their own perceptions of their needs.

Students' concerns

The detailed results of this questionnaire have been discussed elsewhere (M. Bloor 1986), but the most interesting result as far as this paper is concerned was that there were certain areas that all students agreed should be included in the course. What is more, these were not always areas that had struck us as the most urgent or the most attractive.

As far as the simple questionnaire was concerned, virtually all the students, for example, identified *punctuation* as a problem. The *structure of long sentences* and the use of the *passive voice* were other areas of difficulty mentioned.

We found it important to follow the questionnaire with a discussion session. The detailed discussion which took place moved us away from such well-trodden paths into more details with respect to problems of planning and presentation. Some students realized — and admitted — that they had never really considered the question of planning a piece of work at all. Others, notably the French students, had a very rigid approach to essay planning and seemed inclined to squeeze topics into one pre-ordained plan (based on the thesis-antithesis schema, taught in French lycées) whether or not it was suitable for the subject in hand.

The discussion led to some students revealing that they had very little idea of what was expected of them in written work in a British university. Some thought a re-hash of lectures was what was called for. This led us into a discussion of the necessity for reading and the relationship between reading and written work. This, in turn led to requests for a lesson on 'Referring to the literature' (or 'How to avoid plagiarism').

Tutors' concerns

Most students were new to the university, but a significant minority were

in their second year and had previously submitted written work for correction in their departments. These students had the comments of their subject tutors to draw on as indicators of their problems, and their desire was to be taught how to write 'clearly'. It was revealed that 'not clear', 'make yourself clear', and 'write more clearly' were the most common cover-all phrases used by tutors for pointing to inadequate English.

As the students revealed their problems and worries, the contents of a week by week series of study areas began to be formulated. The final list did not look very structured as it seemed impossible to get agreement. We wanted to include grammar and punctuation incidentally as this was necessary support for more functional work. So, for example, when teaching 'Referring to the literature', we would teach the use of inverted commas (and associated commas) for direct quotations, and, similarly, the use of the colon to introduce a long quotation. The students, who wanted sessions devoted exclusively to punctuation, agreed to this reluctantly, but later requested at least one lecture to bring together the odds and ends of work done on punctuation.

The problems with handling complex structures was related — by negotiation — with specific types of clause relations common in academic texts: reason, result, concession, and so on. The discussion helped the students to understand something of the intricacies of how the formal aspects of the language relate to its use. It also helped *us* to understand the feeling of inadequacy many students had about very basic aspects of language use.

Class organization

With a class of this type, there is no possibility for negotiating the mode of study since the class format has already been established. But instead, it is possible to take up issues regarding choice of class organization and teaching style, and some of the methodological variables outlined by Strevens (1980). Even here of course, the choice cannot be completely free. On the Academic Writing course where we experimented with syllabus negotiation, various options for class organization were offered. The choice was limited by the authors' conception of how writing skills could be improved:

Lecture + Practice in class

Lecture + Practice for homework

Practice activities with worksheet and notes in class (with lecturer as 'adviser')

A basic essential requirement in our opinion is *practice*, and this has to be explained to students who believe (as some did) that their writing skills could be improved merely by instruction. The overwhelming choice of class style was the lecture format. The students wanted to be told *how* to write, and they were fairly confident that, given enough instruction, they would be able to succeed. We were more sceptical.

Finally, after discussion, it was agreed that the first term's work would

consist of lectures with set (optional) homework, and the second term's work would consist of 'workshops' where students practised some of the most important aspects of writing that had been introduced in the first term and tried out specific techniques like summarizing research findings or presenting negative arguments.

The students voted with their feet for their chosen format, with high attendance for first term's lectures and with usually about two-thirds of the participants doing the homework. In the second term, for the workshops, the numbers dropped by nearly half. Whether or not students really did manage to improve their written work by attendance at lectures is a question that we are not able to answer. They *felt* that they had improved and we would like to think that at the very least the lectures gave them an important boost of confidence. Those who attended the workshop in the second term agreed that the process had been a salutary experience.

Options concerning group work and pair work were largely excluded by the fixed furniture of the lecture theatre — although it did prove possible in the second term to negotiate some group work with a number of students from the same department.

Subject specificity

As far as the specificity of individual students' subjects needs were concerned, the approach was similar to that adopted by James (1983) and one commonly practised in ESP: each student was invited to bring to class copies of relevant books and academic papers in the specific subject of interest to be used as the basis for certain tasks (for example, *referencing* and *summarizing*). Sometimes the class did their own linguistic research, by finding instances of rhetorical features (for example, *exemplification* and *generalization*) from the texts.

Conclusion

The motivation factor in syllabus negotiation is a mixed one. For many students, the initial impact of negotiation is disturbing and possibly slightly demotivating, but our experience suggests that these students quickly perceive the benefits of taking a measure of control and join those of their colleagues who from the outset have been stimulated by the novel challenge of this conferred power.

In working on a one-to-one basis, negotiation seems a natural enough procedure and presents comparatively few major problems, though even here some students display a degree of resistance to the idea that they should make decisions. In a classroom situation, the process is considerably more complicated, and it is necessary to establish at the outset what the constraints are, for otherwise no viable programme will emerge. Whilst 'pseudo-negotiation' is to be avoided, the counsellor/course organizer does have as important a role in the negotiation as the students, who need help with determining what they really want, within the limits set by fellow-students' wishes and general feasibility.

Syllabus negotiation increases students' understanding of the nature of language in use and of the learning process; it helps them to become aware of the facilities available in the immediate context of the university and in the wider context of society; it improves their ability to formulate their learning goals; and, above all, it enables them to begin to take control of their own learning, breaking out of the cocoon of dependence on the teacher. Once this has happened, negotiation inevitably becomes an ongoing process. It is thus that the foundations of autonomy are laid.

Note

1. Ager et al (op cit) compare the counselling process in assisted self tutoring to a medical consultation culminating in a prescription. For Ager et al, the student appears to be in a sense sick; Curran presents him as mentally deranged.

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Autonomy and Individualization in Language Learning: The Role and Responsibilities of the EAP Tutor

Diane Houghton, *University of Birmingham*

Chris Long, *Hong Kong Polytechnic*

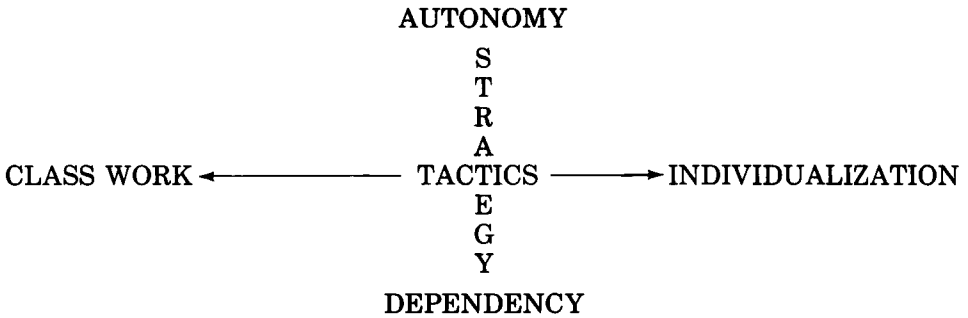
Paul Fanning, *Middlesex Polytechnic*

The terms 'autonomy' and 'individualization' are sometimes used by language teachers as if they were synonymous; but they do, in fact, refer to different concepts. Neither of necessity implies the other, though the two terms can be used together to form parts of a particular approach to language learning. Their implications for the EAP tutor are not necessarily the same, and it is the purpose of this paper to look at the two concepts in relation to the role and responsibilities of the EAP tutor. This is a topic which has tended to be rather neglected in the EAP literature.

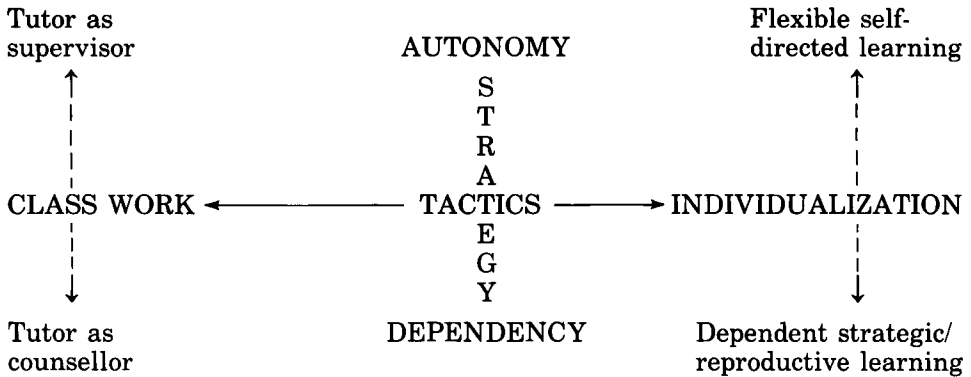
Autonomy (self-government, personal freedom) is, for the EAP tutor, likely to be seen in terms of a value judgement. The autonomous self-directed learner, both in terms of language learning and academic discipline studied, is the idea. Autonomy in learning is generally given a high value in Western education systems. Thus the dependent student, who relies heavily on the sources of authority presented, and is reluctant to make his/her own judgements about the truth or value of what is presented as knowledge, is generally regarded as inadequate by Western educationalists.

Individualization in language learning does not by itself imply a value judgement. It merely refers to an emphasis towards the individual as opposed to the group (since for many language teachers, group=class). Decisions about individual or group learning are usually made on a pragmatic basis. Cost effectiveness is often given prominence, as also is availability of resources such as staff, accommodation and equipment. Decisions about individualization are generally tactical in nature, unlike decisions about autonomy, which are generally strategic and long-term. However, some decisions related to individualization may be strategic, in relation to particular theories of learning or views about the value of socialization as a learning tool.

We can relate autonomy and individualization by means of the following grid:



Let us now try to fit the roles of tutor and learner into this model. Looking at the dependency v. autonomy axis, we can say that the more dependent the learner, the more the role of the EAP tutor is likely to resemble that of a counsellor; and the more autonomous the learner, the more the role of the tutor will approximate to that of a supervisor. The characterization of learning as flexible self-directed or dependent strategic/reproductive is taken from Entwistle & Ramsden (1983). This work will be looked at in Section C of this paper. We can add tutor and learner roles to the grid:



When we attempt to look at tutor role in relation to the class v. individualization distinction, it is more difficult to make generalizations. Individualization can mean a one-to-one staff-student encounter, giving both participants a great amount of scope; or it can mean one staff member with a larger number of students all pursuing individual tasks, so that the amount of individual attention given or received may be difficult to control or predict. If we add the autonomy v. dependency axis, it becomes more complex. In theory one might suggest that as the student becomes more autonomous, the student's arena expands and the tutor's becomes smaller (i.e. upwards and rightwards from the centre of the grid). But at the same time a very dependent manipulative learner in a one-to-one encounter can sometimes effectively deny a tutor any space at all (i.e.

downwards and rightwards from the centre of the grid). At the left hand side of the grid one might question whether the tutor can have a counselling role with groups. Though an unlikely situation, some teaching methods may permit this.

Thus, there are many possibilities, and the role of the EAP tutor is likely to vary considerably in individual situations. We will now look at three different situations, which illustrate different aspects of the autonomy/individualization distinction. The examples are:

- (1) the tutor's role in a packaged writing course at Hong Kong Polytechnic;
- (2) one-to-one teaching of remedial EAP to undergraduates at Middlesex Polytechnic, London;
- (3) a case study of a dependent postgraduate student at Birmingham University.

Each description will be followed by brief comments on the aspects of autonomy or individualization illustrated in the example; and some general comments on implications for the EAP tutor's role and responsibilities will then conclude the paper.

The tutor's role in a packaged writing course

Chris Long, Hong Kong Polytechnic

In the 1970s Hong Kong Polytechnic went through a period of rapid growth and its student population expanded by 25 per cent p.a. for a number of years. The Languages Department, which is largely a servicing (ELT) department, acquired a staff of seventy. But the Polytechnic ran into financial difficulties and staff slowdown began in the early eighties.

Each section of the Languages Department was asked to re-think its teaching programme. The Engineering Section (that I belonged to) found itself short of twenty-eight teaching hours and it was decided to make drastic changes to the Second Year Course which had until then been a thirty hour workshop based course. The first proposal was to offer a short high intensity programme (SHIP) to about a fifth of the 639 second year Engineering students. However I argued for a self-study course which could be offered to all. The second proposal was to divide the 639 students into groups of three. I was lucky to have a colleague who helped to put together SHOP (a Mark 2 version of SHIP) — a self-study English language writing course.

The students were grouped into threes, the material was distributed, SHOP went into business. However, there was only one supervisor to handle 213 groups. The marking of the assignments was the major problem — the 213 groups meant 213 assignments for each of the three stages of SHOP. The work was farmed out to other teachers who not surprisingly complained of being turned into 'marking machines'; they had no contact with the students, simply the chore of marking the assignments. A tutor system was clearly needed to give support to the course and the students.

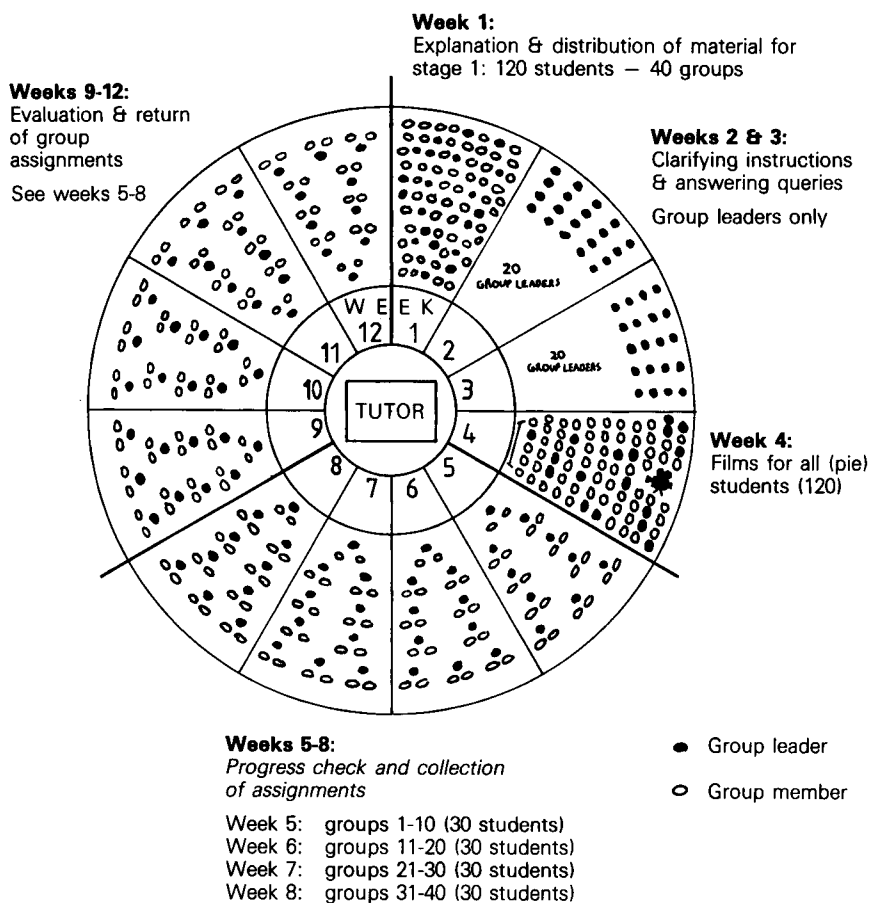
In 1985-86 five hours were 'found' for SHOP and these five hours were allocated to five tutors (our students come from five engineering departments). Each tutor had approximately 120 students to manage — with only one hour a week to manage them in. But what form was this 'management' to take? How best could the tutor support the students in SHOP? The 3-month cycle (shown in the diagram on page 79) is one suggested way of 'managing'. It shows my own class of 120 PIE students and the various phases and associated tutor activities of this three-month cycle. The diagram shows the stages of distribution, explanation, clarification, socialization (the film show), progress checking, collection of assignments, evaluation and phased return of marked assignments. All these activities require the tutor to perform a variety of supportive roles: ranging from counsellor and social event maker to evaluator and exhorter.

The key I feel to the successful operation of the course and to being effective as a tutor is the contact made through the group leader. Each student of each group is a group leader in turn (there are three stages in SHOP) and leaders must be ready to speak for their groups and report on progress and problems at the weekly sessions. The autonomy of SHOP resides in the freedom the groups have in organizing the group assignments. The students have to produce group assignments before a deadline (or 'checkpoint' as it is termed in SHOP). They therefore need to co-ordinate their individual efforts (some of the assignments are deliberately split into three parts) and to run the checks detailed on the check lists which accompany each workbook.

Our students find even this limited autonomy a novel feature of the course and tutors need to check whether the principle of shared work, shared assignments (i.e. shared learning) is being fully exploited. Hong Kong students are quick to organize themselves but are sometimes tempted to take short cuts. One of the main aims of SHOP is for students to produce written assignments where the language structures are carefully checked; the tutor's job here is one of encouraging a systematic approach by the group members to their various tasks. The penalty for incomplete or unsatisfactory work is the re-submission of the assignments; students will pass if the group assignments are complete and satisfactory and this point is made clear to them. The assignments are generally well done and re-submissions are rare.

The roles of the tutor in a self-study course have been discussed at length in Open University articles on distance learning and emphasis is often given to the role of the tutor in facilitating social events to make the students feel less isolated. The Polytechnic students do not suffer from this isolation but are gregarious people and enjoy coming together as a body — for a film for instance. I feel that there should be one social event in every stage. A film can also provide ideas for the assignments but I would argue that the major purpose of such an event is to enable students to feel part of a larger body. It is also a good opportunity for the tutor to make announcements, issue reminders and give out general information.

Figure 1: SHOP organization: a possible format.



Some tutors, especially Chinese tutors, feel that they ought to be teaching rather than tutoring, which they perceive as a rather passive role – they tend to feel uneasy about not being in front of a class and teaching in the traditional way. Further discussion of the operation of the course and the various jobs that will have to be done may then be necessary – the diagram (above) is an attempt to summarize the way it could be done. Tutors can arrange it in their own way but it is emphasised that the purpose is to support the learning and learning materials (i.e. the SHOP workbooks) not to replace them!

SHOP was an expedient – a stop-gap that worked well enough to be repeated and it has now become somewhat of a fixture – we have become victims, in a sense, of its non-failure! The question as I now see it is how

to make SHOP better by utilizing the limited time of the tutor to the best advantage.

Autonomy

This is most pronounced in the students' freedom to choose their own groups, and to organize the set work. The actual tasks required did not permit freedom of choice as to what was done. Students would, one imagines, develop some conception of themselves as autonomous learners as they were required to do much of the work without the help of a tutor (however, some students, in the evaluation of the course, said that they missed normal classes and would like these reinstated).

Individualization

This is, we would feel, a fairly unusual example when one is looking at reasons for individualizing. The more common reasons for emphasizing individualization would, we feel, be to give greater staff-student contact, or greater choice of task for the student. However, this particular decision in the Hong Kong case has to be seen in the context of the choice between a more intensive programme for a selected few, or a much smaller programme for all. Costs and staff resources seem to have been important overall factors.

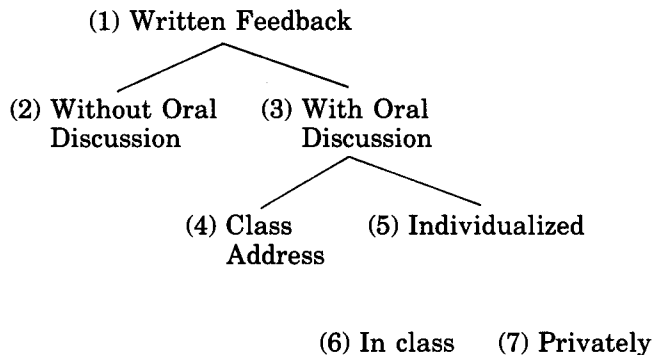
One-to-one teaching of remedial EAP

Paul Fanning, Middlesex Polytechnic

One-to-one teaching of EAP has the inherent value that it allows the best possible form of tutor feedback on written tasks. To see this, consider the diagram below.

Written feedback on written tasks (1) is of course essential. An accompanying oral discussion (3) can explain and reinforce the written feedback, and also gives learners a say in the diagnosis of their problems. Individualized discussion (5) is the most preferable sort of oral feedback because it better caters for each learner's personal needs, interests, etc.

Figure 2: Ways of responding to written tasks



And if this discussion is held privately (7), as one-to-one teaching ensures, the learner is spared embarrassment, the teacher interruptions, and the rest of the class distraction.

This inherent value of individual tutorials, however, is not always enough to counteract the valid objections on economic grounds that can be made to what is often seen as an inefficient use of tutor time. In many cases there must be more to commend individual tutorials (ITs) if they are to be adopted. It is arguable that the remedial situation increases the desirability of ITs.

Remedial EAP has as its sole objective the correction of past learning failures. At Reading University I taught a group of overseas post-graduates who had completed a pre-sessional English course but who still caused their departments to request additional language assistance for them. At Middlesex Polytechnic, the European Business Administration degree requires that the students with the weakest English receive an additional three hours per week of English on top of a basic six hours.

Common to both of these situations is the small number of remedial students. Small numbers are probably typical, since generally to brand larger numbers as failures would be impolitic. When the numbers are small, ITs become more attractive economically. Yet the implications of the remedial situation are not solely economic. There is also a pedagogic reason why ITs become more desirable.

In a non-remedial situation there may be value in asking students to work together on preparation or follow-up exercises that generate a narrow range of 'right' answers and which consequently can be followed up in a plenary session. In a remedial situation this sort of work is likely to have less value. Remedial learners are by definition likely to have already attempted many exercises of this type and, because they still need language help, to be learners who find this approach of limited value. They might respond better to more analysis of their own authentic 'free' writing. Such analysis must be individualized, because free writing generates unique responses.

The way in which individual writing tutorials have actually been conducted at Middlesex Polytechnic is probably similar to that in other institutions, though underlying the central activity of tutor and learner together 'going through' samples of the learner's authentic writing are a number of strategic stages developed through experience. The full work cycle comprises selection of a writing topic, the handing in of the written work to the tutor and its marking prior to the IT, the tutorial itself, and follow-up.

The need for prior marking of assignments is paramount in the interests of efficiency. Rarely will the end of an essay be reached during an IT if the tutor has not done the necessary pre-marking. The ideal topics for this sort of writing tuition have proved to be essays awaiting submission to 'main subject' lecturers. The full authenticity of this sort of topic has obvious motivational benefits. Moreover, the fact that the topic is still 'live' usually leads to the learners readily rewriting their

first effort to take account of classroom feedback — a highly desirable follow-up for two reasons. The rewriting reinforces language learning, and secondly it makes the use of ITs more economically acceptable by increasing the amount of learner engagement per unit of tutor time.

Unfortunately it is not always possible to utilize writing tasks awaiting submission in other subjects for language study purposes. For one thing, learners occasionally have periods when no extraneous writing has been set. We have used two other sorts of writing: either past authentic essays *after* they have been assessed elsewhere for content, or essays set by ourselves. On balance the latter seem preferable, as it is difficult to revive the students' interest in 'dead' assignments. And with care the language teacher's writing task can approach that of the main subject for authenticity. One ploy is to find a topic that students believe is likely to occur in a forthcoming main subject examination. The essay-writing and rewriting may then be accepted as worthwhile revision as well as language study.

Within the above procedure, it is possible for students to be more or less autonomous. Scope for autonomy occurs in the selection of the writing topic (there may be a choice available of main subject essays), and in the follow-up. A truly autonomous learner will come to the one-to-one feedback session eager to identify linguistic weaknesses for further attention. (S)he will then go away and not just correct errors, but devote attention to ironing out chosen weaknesses, perhaps by the use of self-access language materials. The more dependent learner will rely on the tutor for suggestions regarding follow-up language work.

Autonomy

Here we have a group of students who require more intensive support than is normal on the courses for which they are studying. Given individual assistance, they vary quite widely in their approach to the tasks given, the implication being that they bring to the tasks an already existing predisposition towards autonomy or dependence in learning. Whether the more dependent learners are helped towards greater autonomy through this additional support is not stated.

Individualization

Individualization in the sense of a one-to-one tutor-student ratio for remedial teaching sessions, is seen as the most effective way to promote language proficiency in the long run. Cost would no doubt be a factor here; and it may be difficult, in situations similar to that described here, to persuade those concerned with cost-effectiveness that there are sound educational reasons for higher cost programmes.

A case study for a dependent learner

Diane Houghton, University of Birmingham

Mr. Chong is in his late 20s, of Chinese origin, of a Buddhist family from South East Asia. He studied for one of the postgraduate diplomas in the

Faculty of Commerce & Social Science at Birmingham University, gaining a Distinction. He had financed himself from his savings, and the Department found funds to help him study for a Master's degree. His earlier education had been in the Chinese medium and the national language, with a limited amount of English. Though he had an aptitude for science, his Advanced Levels had been in commerce. He had worked as an accountant, taken his business examinations part-time, and then taught accounting at evening classes. His written English is good, his spoken English fluent but inaccurate.

He is an able student, hardworking, cautious, concerned with detail, achievement-oriented, competitive and anxious. He is motivated by what he perceives the teacher to require (a strategic orientation to study, Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). Despite much reassurance he frequently asks 'What do the lecturers require of us?' He also tends towards reproduction of given material in essays. Hounsell's (1984) description of essay writing as 'arrangement' fits Mr. Chong's approach, where the essay is seen as an ordered presentation embracing facts and ideas, with the definition of the essay being tacit and implied, the emphasis being on passively restating and regurgitating source materials.

I chose Mr. Chong as a case study as, despite his Distinction at diploma level, he was very dependent on his lecturers. I was interested in learning more about the reasons for dependency in learning and I thought I might also be able to help Mr. Chong become more autonomous as a learner. Mr. Chong agreed to this arrangement. In this way a researcher wishing to help a student become more autonomous can fall into the trap of pandering to his or her need to be dependent. However, with Mr. Chong I felt he was aware that he was giving something, i.e. research data, and saw the arrangement as for the benefit of us both.

The stages of the case study included the following:

- I Individual tutorials (some were taped).
- II Questionnaires. These were based on:
 - (a) Entwistle & Ramsden's (1983) study of orientations to learning
 - (b) Holland's (1985) categorization of orientations to work and choices of environment
 - (c) Belbin's (1981) characterization of roles necessary in effective working groups.
- III Informal interview (taped) with Mr. Chong on:
 - (a) his background
 - (b) his responses to the questionnaires.
- IV Informal interviews (taped) with subject lecturers.
- V Discussion with the Programme Director.

I Tutorials

These confirmed that Mr. Chong was very able, but anxious and conformist in his approach to study.

II *Questionnaires*

These confirmed many of my own assessments. Points where his answers surprised or puzzled me were dealt with in the taped interview.

III *Taped interview*

(a) *Background*

He responded with an impassioned narrative of his mother's total control over his life in childhood through her insistence on consulting a medium (a 'Temple Aunty', a relative of the family) for advice on everything he wanted to do, however small. The answer to his requests had generally been no, so that he had been unable to do many of the things he had wanted to, and had experienced considerable unhappiness at times.

(b) *Responses to Questionnaires*

(i) Entwistle & Ramsden (1943: see pp. 200-201, 228-233)

This confirmed his strategic and reproducing orientation to study. He showed an intrinsic rather than an extrinsic motivation for studying, which surprised me. But he revealed that he enjoyed the quantitative subjects on his course, though not those related to human behaviour.

(ii) Holland (1985: see useful summary in Handy (1985, p. 38))

Mr. Chong saw himself as intellectual, conventional and artistic. I queried only the third choice, and it emerged that as a child he had liked line-drawing and architecture, but not painting.

(iii) Belbin (1981: see useful summary in Handy (1985, pp. 166-167))

Mr. Chong's choices were: the monitor-elevator, the company worker and the team worker. Again I queried the third choice. Belbin's definition shows someone who holds a team together by being supportive, listening, encouraging, harmonizing, understanding: someone who is likeable, popular but uncompetitive. Mr. Chong felt that teams were important to him, but that he could only operate in a team he had picked himself, or where there was no one claiming to be his superior. He always had trouble fitting into existing teams. I asked Mr. Chong if being a leader was important to him, and he felt that if he did not reach a position of leadership in an organization he would feel he had failed in his career.

IV *Taped Interviews with Lecturers*

Lecturers were asked what they expected of a good student at Master's level. No reference was made to Mr. Chong. My assessment was that he could easily meet the academic criteria stipulated by the lecturers; but one of the lecturers stressed that, for his particular subject, ability to get on with others and take a leadership role was important, and he made a statement to the effect that someone (he very possibly meant Mr. Chong) 'who made the hackles of other people in the class rise', would probably not make an effective manager.

V Discussion with Programme Director

Mr. Chong himself had told me of a breakdown in relationships in a case study group he had been assigned to, and bearing in mind the lecturer's comments on Mr. Chong's possible lack of interpersonal skills, I asked the Director whether he thought I should discuss Mr. Chong's problems with him. The Director was uncertain and admitted that an incident involving Mr. Chong's response to a situation requiring interpersonal skills earlier in the course had made him feel that maybe it was not a good thing for Mr. Chong to have been helped to stay on for the Master's.

Thus we have a situation where an intellectually able student is set to follow a career path for which he does not seem well suited. I have to ask myself whether I can, or should try to help Mr. Chong towards more effective group skills; and if so, how. I do not at present have any answers. And the case study has gone in a very different direction from the one I planned.

Autonomy

Here we have a student who, through his struggle against the difficulties of his early years, and his ability to finance himself on a course and to do well, must have developed a fair amount of autonomy as a person. Yet this is not the picture he presents as a learner. His dependency earns him quite a lot of individual staff time, giving him reassurance about the academic aspects of his course; but it is likely that he has very little awareness of what it is about his behaviour that alienates others. And those who could help him with this seem reluctant or uncertain.

Individualization

In academic terms, this student does not need the individual attention that he gets from his tutors. Yet in psychological terms, he probably does need this attention. As he has paid a lot of money for his courses, he may also feel, as a consumer, that he is entitled to individual attention as he requires it.

The roles and responsibilities of the EAP tutor

The three examples described above suggest that the EAP tutor has a wide range of roles and responsibilities. Being a lecturer or teacher is just a small area of the tutor's functions. The Hong Kong example suggests that the tutor may be involved in management, administration, curriculum development, materials production, plus all the other functions described by Chris Long (counsellor, social event maker, evaluator, exhorter). Paul Fanning illustrates the role of the tutor as an academic support for overseas students 'at risk' on their specialist courses; and Diane Houghton's case study shows the complexities and uncertainties involved in the pastoral role with individual students. As well as coping with the more generally recognized academic and professional requirements of the job, EAP tutors need to show a considerable amount of

flexibility, tolerance, imagination and sensitivity in the area of interpersonal relationships.

Tutors may find it helpful to look at their own roles in relation to the extent to which these help their students towards greater autonomy as learners. Tutors could identify the various roles they perform, and try to assess how far each role contributes to student autonomy. Such an analysis may highlight a need for changes in the curriculum or in the tutor's use of time.

One important characteristic of the EAP tutor's role, which is rather played down in the three examples, but is crucial to the full understanding of the tutor's roles and responsibilities, is that he or she essentially provides a service function, usually for other departments or faculties. Thus the tutor's relationship with the departments, courses and staff for whom the service is provided is extremely important.

The EAP tutor may at times seem to be walking a tightrope: not quite sure of the dividing line between his or her roles and responsibilities, and those of the subject specialists on the student's main academic course. This difficulty may be compounded where individual students are concerned. With someone in a position similar to that of Mr. Chong, the extent of the EAP tutor's responsibilities is very unclear, and one can see difficulties arising if an EAP tutor's perception of the problem differed radically from that of the student's other lecturers.

In addition, an EAP tutor can sometimes feel that his or her function is only valued as long as the interests of all other parties are satisfied first. Many EAP tutors operate under conditions of semi-permanent job insecurity; and they may not always be considered to have an equal status with their academic colleagues in other parts of the institution. And where access to financial resources is limited, EAP provision is often considered a low priority.

How do these factors relate to the issues of autonomy and individualization? Taking individualization first, it would seem that most EAP tutors recognize the importance of the principle, whether in individualizing the work for their students, or in providing opportunities for individual consultations as needed.

But in many institutions it is difficult to persuade those responsible for financial decisions that extra spending on staffing (other than on a very temporary basis) is justified economically, even where it can clearly be justified on educational grounds. A general trend away from subsidized education provision towards a system of full-cost fees has exacerbated this difficulty for some institutions.

Looking at student autonomy, the nature of the EAP tutor's role as provider of services to other courses can make it difficult for the tutor to know how successful his or her contribution has been. If students who were at one time dependent on the EAP tutor's support no longer make use of this, is it because they have developed autonomy as learners, or because they have dropped out for one of many possible reasons? Feedback from subject lecturers can sometimes provide an answer to this question in

individual cases; and occasionally tutors receive feedback from past students. But EAP tutors for the most part have to rely on a process of continuous self-assessment, matching their own perceptions with evidence available from the existing situation, to decide whether their approaches and methods are contributing to the long-term autonomy of the learners who receive tuition and support from them.

How EAP tutors try to solve the problems inherent in their work will vary according to the situation in which they work. Support of colleagues, and self-help organisations such as Selmous, can be helpful in generating pressure for change in particular institutions. Perhaps the last word should go to Tim Johns, who wrote in 1981:

The most appropriate balance between 'internal' and 'external' measures will, of course, vary between one institution and another: what is certain is that we can only gain strength from the realization that ours is, indeed, a worldwide profession with many problems in common and — by the same token — many opportunities in common too.

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Making Friends and Influencing Tutors: Strategies for Promoting Acculturation in the EAP Classroom

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Acculturation

Acculturation can be a hot subject. Consider the following quotations from two articles in the *EFL Gazette* of July and September 1986. First the case for the defence: the writer claims that the communication of British culture to one's students is 'opening their minds to another culture, broadening their horizons if you will, and at the same time making them less ethnocentric, an important advantage for language learners if we are to believe the research.' Two months later the prosecution hit back: in the second writer's opinion, acculturation could mean indoctrination. 'I am sure, though, that I am not the only EFL teacher who is fundamentally opposed to any attempt to glorify British culture and implicitly devalue others.'

Acculturation apparently means different things to different people. However, defining acculturation as adaptation to another culture, we believe that it is valuable, indeed necessary, for the English language learner in an English speaking environment to adapt to the host culture, and that it is important for the teacher to facilitate this. At one end of the scale this adaptation could involve understanding how a British queue works; at the other a deep interest in the British Constitution or the novels of Jane Austen; in between the extremes lies a fascinating territory populated with all kinds of attitudes and behaviours.

Evidence for one kind of belief in acculturation can be found in many of the published materials we use for the teaching of spoken English, where the badges of authenticity are discos and pubs, boyfriends and girlfriends, pop-singers and media folk.

Evidence for deeper concern with acculturation can be found in recent second language acquisition theory. For example, J.H. Schumann's Pidginization Hypothesis focuses on Social Distance factors which, he claims, inhibit or advance the progress which immigrants make in learning the language of the host country. Amongst the factors he emphasizes are such things as:

Enclosure: the degree to which host and immigrant cultures have separate institutions in such areas as education or religion.

Cohesiveness: the degree to which the immigrant community stick together.

Attitude: the opinions that the immigrant and host communities hold of each other.

Cultural congruence: the degree to which the immigrant and host cultures 'match' each other.

Schumann is, of course, talking here about whole communities, and researchers who have looked more at individuals have questioned the social distance hypothesis. For example, in a small study of three immigrants, Stauble (1978) found that psychological contact with the host country was more important than the social contact in the acquisition of a standard form of the host country's language. Acton (1979) also moved the debate in a more 'psychological' direction by replacing Social Distance with Perceived Social Distance. The question is now not 'How far is the immigrant's culture from that of the host country?' but 'How far does the immigrant *think* his culture is from that of the host country, and where does he place *himself* in relation to both cultures?'. Acton in fact concludes that 'successful language learners see themselves as maintaining some distance between themselves and both cultures'. This conclusion is incorporated by Brown (1980) into his Acculturation model, which involves four stages.

Stage 1 is characterized by excitement and euphoria on the part of the newcomer. At Stage 2 there is culture shock: 'feelings of estrangement, hostility, indecision, frustration, sadness, loneliness, homesickness, even physical illness'. The crucial Stage 3 is labelled the culture stress stage and is characterized by a partial recovery, and Stage 4 ideally involves assimilation or adaptation, with the new culture being accepted and self-confidence returning. At Stage 3 Brown sees, like Acton, the need for an *optimal* distance between the learner and the target culture 'to produce the necessary pressure to acquire the language — pressure that is neither too overwhelming . . . nor too weak'.

Thus in Second Language Acquisition Theory real contact with the target culture, especially psychological contact, is seen as important for proper second language development. At the same time a certain degree of tension, or distance, between the two cultures may be fruitful at a particular stage of language learning.

Cultural perception and academic success

Coming closer to our own arena of study, there is further evidence of the importance of acculturation for students who come to Britain and the United States to study.

Courtenay and Mackinson, in their 1971 ODM Study Fellows Survey found that coping with separation difficulties was linked to the ability

to adapt to a new environment. In a 1981 British Council report on the performance of O.D.A. Study Fellows, 30 per cent were found to perform inadequately because of inadequate language proficiency and motivation and a failure to adapt to the new academic and social environment. Some researchers such as Burns (1965) and Sen (1970) have found that English language proficiency may not be the major factor contributing to the student's academic success or lack of it; problems of social and cultural adjustment may be more important. Klineberg and Hull, in their 1979 international study of the migrant student situation, concluded that 'students who are satisfied and comfortable with their interaction with local people and local culture' were more likely to be satisfied overall with study overseas. Babiker, Cox and Miller, on the other hand, found that Cultural Distance, as measured by their Cultural Distance Questionnaire, did not predict academic performance, though it did correlate with anxiety and the number of medical consultations sought by overseas students. Hawkey's 1981 study of a group of twenty-six O.D.A.-sponsored students during and after a pre-session English course revealed that few of the students made British friends and that twenty out of the twenty-five interviewed complained of homesickness related to missing such things as their job, their climate, their customs and their food. Eighteen out of twenty-three had reservations about the British. Ten out of twenty-three respondents saw the British as kind, friendly, helpful or warm, but of these ten, six qualified their praise. (For example, the British were seen by more than one as helpful, but insincere or unfriendly.) Hawkey attempted, in a questionnaire, to tap students' perceptions of their own and British culture by getting them to rate the characteristics of British people and their fellow countrymen on seven-point scales (e.g. Interesting/Boring; Prejudiced/Unprejudiced). The results, as one might expect, were inconclusive: both countries were usually seen positively. There was a link, but not a very conclusive one, between the perception of little difference between the home country and Britain and academic success, but there were also contradictory responses. An unhappy and homesick student rated his own country negatively; a student who refused to talk at an interview rated Britain positively. Hawkey's conclusion about this part of his research reveals too many intervening variables with too few (and too individually different) people and contexts to support a straight causal relationship between the amount of C2 contact and academic/social success'.

Most of these studies suggests that acculturation is important in some measure to the overseas student's success in learning English and in studying his own academic subject. However, they leave the British (or American) Course organizer and teacher with a lot of detail to fill in. What precisely constitutes important cultural distance, or cultural congruence, to use Schumann's term? If customs, what customs? If attitudes, what attitudes? And how can we find out? What can and should be done about cultural distance? Can and should East meet West, and if so, at what psychological level? What role does the teacher have in

this? The answers to these queries fall under two broad headings: the *identification* by student and teacher of cultural distance factors, and the *reduction* of the negative effects of these factors. We investigated both of these at Reading.

The Reading project

In the first phase of our project we attempted to identify areas of life where cultural distance might exist. In the second phase we introduced various classroom activities designed to promote awareness of this distance, leading — hopefully — to modifications in the students' behaviour which might then help to minimize the distance.

Identification

The identification phase consisted of the following stages, some of which overlapped:

- a review of our own experiences teaching students here and overseas, and of being foreigners ourselves when teaching overseas
- informal conversations with former students
- preparation of a checklist for interviews
- further interviews
- preparation of a schedule of problems
- administration of a cultural distance questionnaire
- administration of a questionnaire on social and academic behaviour

For the second stage, we had longish, open-ended conversations with two former Algerian students, one a very outgoing and open person, the other very religious, thoughtful and academically able. These conversations, together with material in *Cultural Encounters* (a workbook by Ford, Silverman and Haines) enabled us to produce a checklist for use when conducting further interviews.

Areas were grouped under five headings:

social encounters

- e.g. communal living
- clubs
- touching
- table manners

academic encounters

- e.g. degree of formality
- punctuality
- appointments

service encounters

- e.g. hall porters
- shops
- the police

the Media

attitudes

e.g. to religion
family life

Using this checklist we interviewed a number of students: past and present Algerian students, a very culturally aware (female) Arab post-graduate, and some British postgraduates. (We should say also that by this stage we had decided to focus our work on our current groups of Algerian students: all male, a postgraduate and an undergraduate class.) A number of points emerged: a British student pointed out that being a research student is lonely, whatever your nationality; other comments focused on the problems, common to any nationality, of sharing a kitchen.

Comparing our findings we then felt able to draw up a schedule of problems of cultural adjustment which overseas students appeared to have, categorized according to speech acts, setting, role relationship and concept involved. Thus in the setting Campus/JCR/Hall we have the acts of 'asking for information' and 'asking a favour', the role relationships being student-student, the concepts being those of 'privacy' and 'approach to a stranger'.

Some of the problems are of course very familiar, perhaps intractable ones — we don't claim to be discovering anything new. Amongst the problems we found were those of identifying and relating to the topic of a conversation; being insensitive to indirect request, and accepting invitations with no intention of coming. Concepts included those of appropriacy, individual responsibility, initiative — and of course — linguistic ability. Speech acts included breaking into a conversation, sustaining a conversation and refusing invitations.

During the same period as we were preparing this schedule we administered a cultural questionnaire to the current Algerian students. This dealt with ten features of life in Britain (food, weather, housing, etc.) and ten features of personal behaviour (such as amount of religious belief, relationships, clothing). Respondents were asked to decide in each case whether the feature was

different in my country
similar in my country
I can't say

and in addition whether it was

better in my country
worse in my country
neither better nor worse

A jocular conclusion from the questionnaire findings would be that we should

change the weather
flatten the countryside
provide Algerian cooks
make everyone shake hands
STOP relationships between young people

and then all would be well! More seriously, we can say that with twenty questions and twelve respondents there was a possibility of 240 responses to the effect that 'It is better in my country'. In fact there were eighty instances of 'It is better in my country', including seven cases where students ticked 'similar', sixty-five instances of 'worse in my country' including fifteen where students had ticked 'similar', and sixty-one instances of 'neither better nor worse'. The things which a significant number of students thought were better in their country were:

food
the weather
the way people greet each other
relationships between young people
relationships between young and old
relationships between men and women

With things that were 'worse in my country', there was less unanimity — but

housing
shops
public transport
types of newspaper

were most frequently listed. The tendency thus seems to be for students from a country such as Algeria to rate the UK high on facilities and low on personal relationships and behaviour.

(We gave the same questionnaire on other occasions to groups of young Omani students and a mixed group of mainly Omani and Cypriot students — with broadly similar results. Of note is that 'the amount of religious belief' was overwhelmingly 'better in my country'.)

Our next step was to prepare a multiple choice questionnaire on social and academic behaviour. This was given to the same twelve students and later to a group of British students, nineteen of whom completed it. This questionnaire comprised:

eight questions relating to introductions, greeting and farewells
five questions relating to behaviour at a tutor's house
three questions relating to behaviour in public places
four questions relating to behaviour in the academic setting

For example:

(The A column represents the Algerian students' choices; the B column what the British students chose.)

A1	You are going to a research laboratory for the first time. Several students will already be there.		
		A	B
	(a) You go up to each student and introduce yourself;	1	1
	(b) You go to your bench and say nothing to anybody;	1	0
	(c) You go to your bench and introduce yourself to the nearest student;	1	13
	(d) You go in with a friend who knows the other research students and he introduces you to them.	8	3

On the whole, however, the results of this questionnaire weren't as conclusive as we'd hoped. For example, with A4:

A4	Your classmate — a good friend of yours — is returning to Algeria/going abroad for a few months' fieldwork.		
		A	B
	(a) You say 'goodbye' to him the last time you meet in class;	2	2
	(b) You go to his room in hall to say 'goodbye' the day before he goes;	2	11
	(c) You go with him to Heathrow;	6	1
	(d) You go with him to Reading station and see him off on the coach to Heathrow.	1	3

One of the British students added to choice (c): 'if he/she needed a hand'.

Clear areas of difference between British and Algerian students include: shaking hands, behaviour with friends, what you talk about at your tutor's house — including behaviour towards the tutor's wife. An area where there was a noticeable congruence between the two sets of respondents was behaviour in public places. This we feel represents a problem: students apparently know what the approved behaviour is, yet we have observed them not performing it — but we can only report on such observations anecdotally and cannot confront the students with the evidence. Another notable example of this is B9.

B9	You and your friends have been invited to the home of a (non-Algerian) married couple for lunch. You arrived a few minutes ago.		
		A	B
	(a) You ask your host and hostess a number of questions about themselves and their family;	2	8
	(b) You remain quiet and wait to be asked about yourself;	4	4
	(c) You talk to your friends to show that you feel at home;	1	7
	(d) You tell your host and hostess several things about yourself and your family.	4	0

Our experience is that students *do* in fact talk to their friends and not to the host — but that is not how they responded in their questionnaire. Interestingly a British student commented 'I suppose (a) is the correct answer, but (c) is more natural'.

Similarly in B12 we found that the majority of students ticked the behaviours that we ourselves feel are acceptable, whereas our experience is that students behave otherwise in real life.

	A	B
B12 You are at your teacher's home. His wife is there.		
(a) You introduce yourself to her (because your teacher is busy) and have a conversation with her;	4	14
(b) You wait for your teacher to introduce you and then have a conversation with her;	4	5
(c) You do not talk to her because this may embarrass her;	0	0
(d) You talk briefly to her just before you leave, to thank her for the good food.	3	0

Here the same British student ticked (a) but commented by (c) 'I'd never talk to anyone'.

So I am not sure that these results really advanced our search for the ideal topics to work on — it only highlighted the difficulty of trying to establish them.

Our teaching materials owed most to the insights of our earlier interview phase. We focused on functional aspects: for example, making requests, especially in service encounters; asking favours; greetings; breaking the ice. We could see the results of the questionnaires as perhaps underpinning this, focusing on such concepts as the role of the individual, particularly with regard to initiative and freedom; and role relationships, particularly with regard to superior/inferior and student/student.

Classroom procedures

For the second phase of our project, the reduction of cultural distance, we decided that what we needed to do was to present behaviour to the students and that video was the best means of doing this in the classroom. We adopted two basic approaches here: the first involved students watching video extracts of behaviour, the second involved watching a videoed discussion of behaviour.

We decided to start with video material produced for EFL, recognising its limitations in terms of authenticity, but satisfied that it would be in language at an appropriate level for our students. We decided to try Macmillan's *Video English*: it provided short snippets of behaviour which we felt were reasonably authentic and which were in situations in which our students could expect to find themselves.

Three areas were covered, all having in common the necessity of dealing politely with strangers in a potentially difficult public situation. The first involved making a request to bend a rule.

The second area involved was exchanging faulty goods in a shop. In both situations an unsuccessful and a successful example were presented.

The third functional area using *Video English* was apologizing — this being an area in which some of our students clearly see British behaviour as being insincere and hypocritical. We considered situations where the apology ranged from a mere formality (e.g. apologizing for lack of change) to genuine regret (after bumping into someone carrying a tray of food in a canteen).

The methodology used with these three areas was the same: role-playing the situation; discussing the problems, viewing the video in part, then in full, followed by a repetition of the role play. Each session concluded with a further discussion of the function that had been dealt with, the problems the students had had in identifying and producing appropriate behaviour and the similarities and differences compared to home.

The initial role-plays were hesitant and fairly wooden, with over-reliance on the role cards provided. This was probably largely due to self-consciousness at the activity (and the presence of a video camera!). The students had, however, noticeable intonation problems (especially of pitch height) and it was in this area that there was some improvement after video viewing and further practice.

It was interesting that working on intonation — trying to sound English — often caused great hilarity. This was maybe precisely because it did sound more authentic, but in some cases (male) students identified the intonation pattern presented as distinctly feminine (e.g. 'lovely!', 'Oh, I am sorry!').

Of the situations provided, some were clearly alien: you would not, for example, in Algeria try to exchange clothes once worn or washed. Also the students did not see the necessity to be polite in certain parallel situations at home — a rude shop assistant would, therefore, elicit a rude reaction from a customer. In role play humorous situations developed that were quite revealing — pulling rank ('I know your boss' to the shop assistant) and trying to circumvent rules by bribery (in the video shop).

Whilst *Video English* had highlighted some interesting cultural areas and got our students familiar with the idea of discussing them, we now wanted to move on to more substantial topics — looking at more complex aspects of relationships, between familiars (rather than strangers) and in more informal settings. To this end we chose a short piece of film that provided a situation we felt the students would find interesting: the son bringing a new girlfriend home to dinner to meet the family. This dealt with areas of Western behaviour the majority of our students had identified as different from (and often worse than) in their own country on the cultural difference questionnaire: relationships between young people, between young and old and between men and women. It raised the issue of greetings and treatment of strangers too. We also chose this extract because we wanted to discuss acceptable 'ice-breakers' and conversation topics.

We did not feel this was an area where prior role playing would be very illuminating — the situation was more complex and the students did not know the relevant language/behaviour in English. Instead, they were provided with a worksheet which they read before seeing the video.

The first part of the worksheet, aimed at comprehension, highlighted the areas we wanted to discuss, e.g. preparation for the arrival, clothing, introductions. The first viewing was right through, the second in stages and the third with a tapescript. Answers to the comprehension questions

were elicited after each viewing until they had all been covered. Linguistic problems were briefly glossed, but not given much attention.

The second part of the session was devoted to identifying behaviour 'similar to' or 'different from' behaviour at home. This was the interesting part for us.

The areas identified as being similar were the boy's treatment of his girlfriend and the father's attitude to the girlfriend (he refuses to accept her having found out that her father is an old rival). The differences raised included the way both the young people and the father greet the visitor: this was seen as far too informal (no hand shaking, for example) and familiar. Also, the parents' acceptance of the fact that their son would bring home several girlfriends before settling for one was identified as possible in the capital city but not elsewhere. The behaviour of the child of the family was also commented upon — she was seen as forward and cheeky.

Consideration of topics of conversation threw up differences in who should initiate conversation on such occasions — but the topics permissible seemed similar in both cultures (with some different taboos: e.g. in Algeria you would not ask how many sisters a man has — this is equivalent to asking about salary in Britain!).

An important area for our students that had not yet been dealt with was the academic world. We approached two scientists in the university who have first-hand experience of supervising overseas postgraduate research students. We videoed an interview with them on the roles of the research student and the supervisor in a British university science faculty.

We prepared a worksheet for pre-viewing discussion and then for completion during/after seeing the video. Our post-graduate group of would-be research students was asked, firstly, to rank the personal qualities they thought a research student should have — and then later to listen to see whether or not these qualities were mentioned by the British academics. They were also asked to consider the role of the research student at the various stages of his research and select appropriate/inappropriate behaviour from a range of alternatives. They then did the same for the role of the supervisor. On viewing the video they noted which points were actually mentioned.

This activity brought to light some interesting differences between our students' expectations and those of British university teachers. For example, the students gave a low ranking to such qualities as curiosity, the ability to be critical, and honesty — all of which the academics considered essential. By contrast, the students placed a high value on being methodical and precise.

Our students thought that the research student would be able to tell his supervisor exactly what research he wanted to do, and that the supervisor would then provide the necessary theory and information. The supervisor is thus seen as an expert. The supervisor would teach his student laboratory techniques, and would control the research from beginning to end.

The British academics saw the selection of a research topic as a process of negotiation, and expected the research student to seek out the theoretical knowledge for himself. They were at great pains to point out that the supervisor is fallible, does not know everything and, indeed, learns from his students. Further, the supervisor may well have forgotten some of the basic laboratory techniques — which the new research student would then have to learn from fellow-students or technicians.

There were points of common ground between the expectations of the scientists and our students, but clearly the differences were major. Our students have now seen the video — and, hopefully, have a better understanding of appropriate behaviour in a British academic environment. The whole exercise was quite an eye-opener both for them and us — and clearly opened up a rich source of future orientation projects.

Conclusions

What conclusions — and necessarily tentative conclusions — can we draw from our project? We think that several points emerge, some methodological, some more conceptual or philosophical.

Starting at the more methodological end one can make the perhaps rather obvious point that linguistic limitations in our students will inhibit appropriate behaviour. For instance, the student new to Britain may choose the less embarrassing discourtesy of saying nothing rather than the more embarrassing courtesy of a question or a statement in broken English. We have to beware of reading a language problem as a cultural one.

Linked to this problem is the fact that our students are most in need of cultural orientation at the time when they are usually least able to profit from it because of limited English language proficiency, that is at the beginning of their time in Britain.

There is certainly a problem in finding suitable video materials for use with intermediate-level students. Longer sequences of fairly authentic discourse are required, sequences which are more revealing of typical British or American attitudes and preoccupations than the *Video English* sequences are.

It is of course difficult to evaluate the success of an acculturation programme such as ours. The students reacted fairly favourably to it, but it is difficult to say at this stage whether it has affected long-term attitudes, or even more immediate behaviour problems. That would require a lot of covert observation. The video and role-play can provide on-the-spot evaluation of improvements in limited areas, but it can also inhibit the students, as several said to us.

There is, as has already been mentioned, the problem of the students being able to perceive intellectually what is needed in the host culture but being unable actually to do it. This may be a language problem, or it may be a problem of deep-seated habits emerging under the pressure of a certain situation.

At the more philosophical end of the scale our work has reinforced our belief that within-culture differences can be as significant as between-culture differences. We must beware of culturally stereotyping our students, and of presenting an over-simple British cultural stereotype.

Furthermore, there may be similarities-within-differences. Same and different cannot be simplistically viewed. For example, our students saw 'relations between young people' as a major difference between their culture and ours when filling in our questionnaire. When watching boyfriend-girlfriend behaviour on video the same students judged it to be similar to behaviour back home. This phenomenon, we feel, vindicates the use of video on such a programme to make the abstract concrete.

Finally, a point which has perhaps been postponed too long. It would be a good thing to present British people, especially British students, with some of the feelings our overseas students have about British society. 'Oh wad some power the giftie gie us/ To see oursels as others see us'.

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Self-assessment: The Limits of Learner Independence

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Introduction

Despite a great deal of emphasis in recent years on the role of the learner in the second language learning process, one area in which teachers seem very reluctant to lose their control is that of assessment. Dickinson (1978) made it clear that this was an area for which the learner could potentially take responsibility. The subject was lent further credence by Oskarsson (1978), who suggested a variety of different approaches to self-assessment (SA). Interestingly, he saw the primary aim of SA as being 'to give the individual *continuous feedback* on what he has learnt', or as a way of monitoring progress. Ideally, but only as a secondary aim, 'SA procedures should also enable the learner to assess his *total achievement at the end of a course* or course unit'. In a slightly different vein, Rea (1981) spoke of self-assessment (or rather self-appraisal) as 'a formative component', designed primarily to sensitize the learner to his responsibilities in the planning, execution and monitoring of his language learning activities.

My own view for some time has been that SA is very useful for the purpose of sensitizing. I have thought of it in this context as an important component of self-directed language learning (SDLL), but have felt that it has serious limitations as a method of obtaining an accurate assessment of language proficiency. I have been using both self-assessment forms (with descriptive rating scales) and needs analysis questionnaires for some time. However, my subjective impression over a number of years of trying to implement SDLL has been that individual needs analysis and self-assessment are two areas which are very difficult for some learners to cope with.

There is of course a considerable body of literature pointing to the fact that self-assessment does work and that there is often a very good correspondence between SA and teacher's assessment (TA) or 'objective' test results. One interesting case of SA working on a large scale is at the University of Ottawa, where the placement test previously used in the Centre for Second Language Learning has been discarded in favour of a self-assessment questionnaire, as a means of placing students in homogeneous proficiency level groups. It has been discovered that fewer

changes have to be made to the groups after the initial level than was previously the case when the placement test served as the basis for allocating students to groups (Le Blanc, 1985). However, most research of this kind has been done with monolingual, monocultural groups (particularly European and North American). Moreover, most of the work reported seems to relate to learners who have fairly general aims rather than those who are learning a language for specific purposes. My concern has been with multilingual, multicultural groups of learners who have been studying English for the very precise purpose of following postgraduate courses in a variety of different subject areas. In the sample group referred to later there are 117 students of 39 different nationalities. Within such a varied group it might be expected that some would be better able to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses than others.

It is obvious that some learners are quite capable of determining their language needs and assessing their level of language proficiency realistically. However, SA must work for the vast majority of learners if it is to be really useful. In fact, if SA is to replace placement tests or diagnostic or even proficiency tests, then it should be at least as valid a form of assessment as the tests it replaces. If it can be established that SA does produce accurate results then it must be very important indeed. Not only can it save an enormous amount of teacher time in administering placement tests and other forms of assessment but also, and I think more importantly, it can serve to reduce the involvement of the teacher/helper in SDLL. If it can be shown that SA works then it will be possible to justify the learner's taking more responsibility for this part of the learning process which has generally been considered to be primarily the responsibility of the teacher. Moreover, if learners can be helped to take on this important aspect of the learning process, then other aspects of language learning (such as setting goals, choosing materials, etc.) should also be well within their reach. A deeper involvement of learners in assessment and needs analysis is bound to enhance learning, and it should also have the effect of freeing the teacher to concentrate on developing learning materials and giving help in other parts of the learning process.

It will generally be agreed that individual needs analysis and self-assessment can probably most usefully be applied within the field of SDLL, although they can also play a part in courses of instruction where the teacher is in control of a large part of the learning process. Having considered why they are important within this framework, we now come to give an example of how individual needs analysis and SA can be implemented. In the next section I shall describe what has been done in the Language Centre at the University of Southampton, focusing particularly on our pre-sessional courses in English for academic purposes (EAP). In subsequent sections I shall attempt to analyse the self-assessment scores that students have given themselves, to compare these with tutors' ratings and to comment on some of the cultural variations

that are beginning to emerge. This will not be an exhaustive treatment, but the limitations of the approach adopted will, it is hoped, give rise to further suggestions.

Tests and questionnaires administered

At the beginning of the Southampton pre-session course a placement test is administered, on the basis of which students are divided into teaching groups. At the same time students are asked to assess their own level in each of the four language skills, using descriptive rating scales. The SA forms that students are asked to complete are based on Oskarsson's descriptive rating scales (1978, Appendix 3), though these are slightly modified to reflect our EAP framework.

During the following few days the self-directed learning component of the course is introduced, and as part of this students are asked to complete a needs analysis questionnaire (see Appendix). Despite the previous experience of filling in the SA forms, many students experience great difficulty with these needs analysis questionnaires. This is undoubtedly at least in part a design problem. The forms do appear to be fairly complicated and perhaps somewhat threatening to some learners. However, discussions with students and experimentation with alternative designs suggest that it is not only a design problem. Perhaps even more important is students' lack of readiness to plan their work in this way. Many learners are unaccustomed to thinking of language in terms of the different skills involved. Concepts like stress, rhythm and intonation may be unfamiliar to many students. Many will have very little idea of what is meant by labels like 'reading strategies', and even if the meaning is explained to them they may fail to recognize the need to develop strategies of this kind. With some help from their peers and from their tutors students do normally manage to complete the first two columns, relating to their needs and their present level of proficiency in each skill. They are then left with the problem of working out their priorities for work in SDLL and dividing up the time available for work on the different skills. This too causes enormous difficulty to some students. It seems that what many students would like to do is simply drift into the resources centre and pick up a newspaper, watch a video, play with a CALL package or do whatever takes their fancy on the spur of the moment, leaving the tutors to decide on what *work* needs to be done in the teacher-directed sessions.

At the end of the course students take a final test — not so much for the results as to have something to work towards and to give MSc students some practice in taking examinations. At this stage they are asked to complete a questionnaire on the course, which includes a question on the progress they think they have made. They are also asked to fill in another self-assessment form (identical to the one they completed at the beginning of the course). By this time they have had a fair amount of

practice in self-appraisal and needs analysis. They have also received a considerable amount of feedback from their tutors and from other students, and they have had a chance to compare themselves with other students and with native speakers. Their self-assessment should therefore be based on a fairly informed judgement. It is made clearer to the students at this point, as at the beginning of the course, that the SA scores will not be used against them in any way and that they should therefore try to assess their level as accurately as possible rather than trying to impress or to be falsely modest.

Analysis of self-assessment scores

It is interesting to compare the ratings which students consider reflect their level at the end of the course with those they gave themselves at the beginning.

Looking at the figures for the most recent course we can see the variation for each of the four skills and also for the overall totals (Tables 1 and 2 — page 104).

Over 80 per cent of the final scores on individual skills are either exactly the same as the initial scores or 0.5 or 1.0 point better. However, nearly 11 per cent of the scores on individual skills are lower at the end of the course than at the beginning, and when one looks at overall scores this figure increases to nearly 16 per cent. Before jumping to the conclusion that our courses have a negative effect on nearly 16 per cent of the participants, it is worth turning to the questionnaires that are issued at the end of the course. One of the questions that students are asked concerns the improvement in their English. The fifty-five students on the most recent course who completed the questionnaire give these replies.

Table 3: Assessment of improvement during course (55 students)

Do you think the improvement in your English has been:

Excellent	Good	Quite good	Not very good	None at all
0	18	23	14	0

It could be argued that the question is somewhat weighted towards a positive response. However, the fact that no students answered that they had made no progress at all indicates, as one might expect or hope, that the course has produced positive results. It would be reasonable to suppose that those students who rated their level lower at the end of the course than at the beginning had in fact revised their earlier self-assessment in the light of what they now perceived to be their difficulties. In fact, it is particularly the students who gave themselves a high initial rating who later downgraded their scores. Of those who initially gave

Table 1: Final Self-Assessment Scores Compared with Initial SA Scores (57 students)

	Total Lower	-1	-0.5	No change	+0.5	+1	+1.5	+2	+2.5	Total Higher
Listening	3	0	3	14	16	19	4	0	1	40
Speaking	6	0	6	22	18	8	3	0	0	29
Reading	6	4	2	23	18	7	3	0	0	28
Writing	10	1	9	7	19	15	5	1	0	40
TOTAL	25	5	20	66	71	49	15	1	1	137

Table 2: Final Overall Self-Assessment Scores Compared with Initial SA Scores

Total Lower	-2	-1.5	-1	-0.5	No Change	+0.5	+1	+1.5	+2	+2.5	+3	+3.5	+4	+4.5	+5	Total Higher
9	1	3	3	2	5	3	5	5	4	7	8	5	3	2	1	43

themselves 4 or above, 50 per cent did not change their assessment, whilst over 44 per cent gave themselves a lower rating in the final self-assessment. Of those whose initial score was 3 or 3.5 only 6 per cent subsequently gave themselves a lower rating. Those scoring 2.5 and below in the initial assessment nearly all increased their final rating (fewer than 5 per cent remaining the same and none dropping from their initial score). It would seem, therefore, that many of those who initially rated their ability very highly discovered that they had more difficulty than they had anticipated. Subsequently, they either modified their score downwards or felt that they had made sufficient progress during the course to warrant the score which at the beginning of the course had been something of an overestimate.

We come now to compare the self-assessment scores with the tutors' ratings. I have taken the final self-assessment scores and the final tutors' assessment for 117 students (from our last two pre-sessional courses). The tutors' assessment is based primarily on performance during the course and each student's grades are discussed by all the tutors to ensure a good measure of harmonization. The final reports and grades are sent to the receiving departments, and it is of course very important to give them as accurate an assessment as possible of the students' linguistic ability. There were no observable significant differences between the two groups of students or the two groups of tutors, nor was there any difference from one year to the other in the aims of methodology of the course or of the assessment.

Basically, the data take the form of a two-way contingency table. The variables can be ordered, but the difference between them cannot be quantified in any absolute way. For example, we can say that an 'A' is better than a 'B', but we cannot say how much better or whether the differences between them is the same as the difference between a 'B' and a 'C'. Brewster and Brewster (1976) suggest on their self-assessment scale that 'the advancement of each step takes a unit of time equivalent to the time units needed for the previous two steps' (page 000). Thus, to move from 0+ to 1 would require one unit of time, from 1 to 1+ would need three units, from 1+ to 2 five units, and so on, until by the time the learner is progressing from level 4+ to 5 it takes 89 units of time. Time is of course only one factor, but it serves to illustrate the difficulty involved in quantifying the differences between any two grades and the absurdity of assuming that all such differences are equal.

Correlations have been rejected as a way of comparing the scores, since correlations generally assume linearity. There are, however, a number of measures of association that can be used for 'ordinal' data. The measure that has been adopted for this paper is the Goodman-Kruskal, which is based on counts of concordant and discordant pairs (see Weiss 1968, pages 198-206). In very simple terms we can imagine two students, John and Mary, who are asked to rate their ability in mathematics. John considers himself to be 'average', whilst Mary rates herself as 'good'. In a subsequent test John scores 55 per cent and Mary 97 per cent. The

self-assessment ratings 'agree' with the test results, and John and Mary form a concordant pair. Jane and Peter, on the other hand, rate themselves as 'poor' and 'average' respectively. In the test Jane scores 52 per cent and Peter 40 per cent. In this case the self-assessment ratings and test scores do not 'agree', and Jane and Peter form a discordant pair.

Table 4 shows the results obtained in self-assessment and tutor assessment for listening comprehension. The tutors' ratings range from A to E, while the students' ratings go in theory from 5 to 0 but in practice, as these were advanced courses, from 5 to 2. Anybody applying for a course advertised as advanced is unlikely to admit to the descriptor for Band 0 ('I do not understand the language at all') or even for Band 1 ('I understand the meaning of simple requests, statements and questions if they are spoken slowly and clearly and if I have a chance of asking for them to be repeated. I only understand common words and phrases').

If we take the case of a student who rates his own ability as 5 and whom the tutors rate at A-, this forms a concordant pair with a 4.5/B-. And in fact it forms concordant pairs with all the scores below and to the right. For the purpose of calculating this measure of association, ties (anything in the same row or the same column) are disregarded. To calculate the total number of concordant pairs we take every box in the table and multiply the number there by the sum of the numbers below and to the right.

If we now take the 5/A- we see that it forms discordant pairs with the 2 students who scored 4.5/A. And in a similar way, to obtain the total number of discordant pairs, we take every box in the table and multiply the number there by the sum of the numbers below and to the left.

To be able to calculate the value of γ (the measure of association) the number of concordant and discordant pairs in a table has to be calculated. Let these numbers be P and Q respectively. Then γ is defined as

$$\gamma = \frac{P - Q}{P + Q}$$

The range of values that γ can take varies, in theory, between -1 and +1, with zero for no association. Total concordance would give a value of 1, and total discordance a value of -1.

In the case of listening comprehension there were 2,999 concordant pairs and 1,469 discordant pairs. This gives a measure of association, using the Goodman-Kruskal γ , of 0.34. Quade's formula was used to calculate the asymptotic standard deviation of γ under the hypothesis of independence, and this result was shown to be significant at the 0.2 per cent level.

The measure of association for listening comprehension is very similar to that obtained for speaking (see Table 5), where there were 3,094 concordant pairs and 1,446 discordant pairs, giving a measure of association of 0.36, also significant at the 0.2 per cent level.

These results both express a certain degree of association between tutors' assessment and students' self-assessment, which is what one might expect at the end of a course. The students have by then been in the UK for some time, making considerable use of the spoken language both

Table 4: Listening

TUTOR ASSESSMENT

	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E+	E	TOTAL
5		1	1			1								3
4.5	2		2	2	1	2		2						11
4	4	3	4	4	5	6	9	11	2	1				49
3.5	1	2	2	5	2	3	6	6		1		1		29
3	1				4	3	2	2		5				17
2.5								2		1			1	4
2						1			1				1	4
TOTAL	8	6	9	11	12	16	17	23	3	8	1	1	2	117

SELF-ASSESSMENT

TOTAL NO. OF CONCORDANT PAIRS (P) = 2,999

TOTAL NO. OF DISCORDANT PAIRS (Q) = 1,469

$$\gamma = \frac{P-Q}{P+Q} = \frac{2,999-1,469}{2,999+1,469} = \frac{1,530}{4,468}$$

$$= 0.34$$

Table 5: Speaking

TUTOR ASSESSMENT

	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E+	E	TOTAL
5														0
4.5			1	1			2							4
4	1	2	3	4	4	6	1	2	1	1				25
3.5	2	3	1	4	4	8	7	3	1	2	1		1	37
3		3	1	1	7	4	9	6	3	3	2			39
2.5					1	1			1	3	1	1		8
2		1								2			1	4
TOTAL	3	9	6	10	16	19	19	11	6	11	4	1	2	117

SELF-ASSESSMENT

TOTAL NO. OF CONCORDANT PAIRS (P)=3,094

TOTAL NO. OF DISCORDANT PAIRS (Q)=1,446

$$\gamma = \frac{P-Q}{P+Q} = \frac{3,094-1,446}{3,094+1,446} = \frac{1,648}{4,540} = 0.36$$

receptively and productively, and it is to be expected that they should have a fairly good idea of their real level in these skills. The shock of not understanding what they hear and not being understood by native speakers has already made itself felt.

Reading ability is in many ways the most difficult area for tutors to assess as there are often no obvious signs to demonstrate whether, and at what level of sophistication, understanding has taken place. Obviously, for all the language skills there is the possibility of the student's SA being right and the tutors' evaluation wrong. However, this is probably more likely for reading than for any of the other skills. Consequently, it is not really surprising that the measure of association is lower for reading (see Table 6, page 110). There were 2,820 concordant pairs and 1,555 discordant pairs, giving a measure of association of 0.29, significant again at the 0.2 per cent level. There is still a positive level of association, though not quite so high as for the oral/aural skills.

A previous study which I conducted showed a measure of association for writing ability which was considerably lower than for the other skills (Blue 1986). This tied in with my feeling that many students do not fully realise the demands that academic writing in a foreign language will make upon them. It also tied in with the findings of Davidson and Henning (1985). However, on this occasion (see Table 7) the measure of association for writing was 0.29, the same as that for reading, with 2,906 concordant pairs and 1,591 discordant pairs. This is also significant at the 0.2 per cent level. It would seem that more work needs to be done in the self-assessment of writing skills before this can be established as the weak link in SA.

If one looks in a little more detail at the writing table (Table 7, page 111) it can be seen that there are very considerable differences in some cases between SA and TA. For example, students who assessed their own writing ability at the 3.5 level received grades from the tutors ranging from A to E. Similarly, students whom the tutors rated at C- gave themselves grades ranging from 2 to 4.5. And one student whom the tutors considered to be very good at writing (A-) assessed his own level at only 2.5. It can be seen then that, whilst there is a definite positive association between self-assessment and tutors' assessment, it is far from being a perfect association.

Cultural variations

Finally, I should like to return to my premise that SA is more difficult with multi-cultural groups. One tends to have preconceived notions about the difficulty which certain nationality groupings have with SA. However, it is important to test these preconceptions against reality. Any scores which came fairly close to the diagonal line across Table 8 could be considered to represent a reasonable level of association. We focus therefore on the cases where there is a considerable divergence between SA and TA (all the boxes marked with a cross). Scores in the top right

Table 6: Reading

TUTOR ASSESSMENT

	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E+	E	TOTAL
5				1	1		1							3
4.5	1	1	1	4		2		3						12
4	1	3	4	4	6	7	6	4	1	2	1			39
3.5	3	1	2	3	3	5	13	4	2	3	1		2	42
3		1	1	1	1	2	5	4	1	3				19
2.5							1			1				2
2														0
TOTAL	5	6	8	13	11	16	26	15	4	9	2	0	2	117

SELF-ASSESSMENT

TOTAL NO. OF CONCORDANT PAIRS (P) = 2,820

TOTAL NO. OF DISCORDANT PAIRS (Q) = 1,555

$$\gamma = \frac{P - Q}{P + Q} = \frac{2,820 - 1,555}{2,820 + 1,555} = \frac{1,265}{4,375} = 0.29$$

Table 7: Writing

TUTOR ASSESSMENT

	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E+	E	TOTAL
5														0
4.5		1	1	1	1		1	1						6
4	1		4	5	2	3	5	4	4	2				30
3.5	3	3	2	4	7	7	5	6	2	3			2	44
3		1		1	3		6	6	3	6	1		1	28
2.5		1				2	1		1	2				7
2								1			1			2
TOTAL	4	6	7	11	13	12	18	18	10	13	2	0	3	117

SELF-ASSESSMENT

TOTAL NO. OF CONCORDANT PAIRS (P) = 2,906

TOTAL NO. OF DISCORDANT PAIRS (Q) = 1,591

$$\gamma = \frac{P-Q}{P+Q} = \frac{2,906-1,591}{2,906+1,591} = \frac{1,315}{4,497} = 0.29$$

Table 8: Considerable Divergence between Self-Assessment and Tutor Assessment

		TUTOR ASSESSMENT												
		A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E+	E
5							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.5								X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4		X							X	X	X	X	X	X
3.5		X	X							X	X	X	X	X
3		X	X	X							X	X	X	X
2.5		X	X	X	X	X							X	X
2		X	X	X	X	X	X							X

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Table 9: Nationality Groupings

A	B	C	D
Burma China Hong Kong Indonesia Japan Korea Malaysia Thailand	Bolivia Brazil Ecuador Mexico Peru France Germany Greece Holland Hungary Portugal Spain	Bangladesh Pakistan Sri Lanka Algeria Ethiopia Mozambique Nigeria Sudan Zambia	Egypt Iran Iraq Israel Jordan Lebanon Saudi Arabia Syria Turkey Yemen
(27)	(27)	(27)	(36)

corner represent students who have overestimated their ability (compared with tutors' ratings) whilst those in the bottom left corner represent those who have underestimated their ability. The students can then be divided into four nationality groupings (see Table 9).

The number of overestimates and underestimates for each group can be seen in Tables 10 and 11. The first thing one notices is that there are far more overestimates than underestimates. This ties in with Wangsotorn's work (1981) on postgraduate students. Looking at the four groups we can see that group A had a tendency to overestimate their ability, and that this tendency becomes more pronounced with groups C and D.

Pro rata there are twice as many overestimates in group D as in group A, and only one solitary underestimate. Students in group B, on the other hand, are characterized by a very marked tendency to underestimate their ability. Most of these underestimates come from the Europeans rather than the Latin Americans. Although these results seem very interesting and suggestive, in view of the relatively small number of students in each group it would seem wise not to claim too much for the findings at this stage.

Conclusions

In view of the fairly limited scope of this study it might be wise not to draw too many firm conclusions. However, it would seem reasonable to conclude that with multilingual, multicultural groups, the teacher still has a very important role to play in advising students in the area of needs analysis, assessing students' language proficiency and guiding them towards more accurate self-assessment. This needs to be done not as a means of imposing the teacher's needs analysis and therefore the teacher's syllabus, nor as a means of censoring the students, but in order to bring them to a realistic assessment of their level and their needs, so that they will be able to set goals for their future work.

I am aware that I only have data for one form of self-assessment (using descriptive rating scales). Far more work needs to be done on other forms of SA, such as using concrete situations (e.g. 'I understand when a teacher tells me at what page to open my book'), self-assessment by means of formal tests, informal reality testing, and self-assessment in pairs/groups. All of these are mentioned by Oskarsson (1978).

It may be that a combination of these, together with a greater measure of training learners to assess their own ability, will help to iron out some of the problems and lead to more accurate self-assessment. But until then (in Southampton at least) the role of the teacher in assessment and needs analysis will remain central.

Acknowledgement

I am extremely grateful to Cecilio Mar Molinero for pointing me to the

Table 10: Overestimates (Compared with Tutors' Assessment)

Group	LISTENING	SPEAKING	READING	WRITING	TOTAL
A	5	3	3	5	16
B	4	2	3	2	11
C	5	7	4	6	22
D	12	6	13	13	44
Total	26	18	23	26	93

Table 11: Underestimates (Compared with Tutors' Assessment)

Group	LISTENING	SPEAKING	READING	WRITING	TOTAL
A	1	0	1	1	3
B	8	8	4	7	27
C	0	2	2	1	5
D	0	1	0	0	1
Total	9	11	7	9	36

Goodman-Kruskall γ , for explaining measures of association to me in terms that I could understand and for writing a computer programme to enable me to calculate the significance of the results obtained.

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Appendix

Self-directed Language Learning Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help you to clarify your aims in self-directed language learning. It is important to set yourself realistic goals, bearing in mind the very limited amount of time available for individual study. Try not to set your sights too high. On the other hand though, unless you have some idea of what you are trying to achieve, you are unlikely to achieve it!

One of the biggest problems in self-directed learning is the question of assessment — assessing your level at the beginning of the programme and measuring your progress during the programme. You may find that a fellow student or a tutor can be of help to you here, to confirm or help you to modify your own ideas. In any case, you are advised to discuss your learning strategies and the availability of materials with a tutor/helper after you have completed the questionnaire.

For each of the activities listed there are two questions to ask yourself.

- (1) *'How necessary is it?'* You should answer *Very*, *Quite* or *Not*. In other words, is this something that will be important to you during your time in the UK, and particularly for your studies?
- (2) *'What is your present level?'* Try to be realistic in your assessment, and answer *Good*, *Average* or *Weak*.

When you have answered these two questions for each of the skills, you will be in a position to work out your priorities — the areas you wish to work on during these sessions. We suggest that you select *about five* areas to concentrate on and number these 1 to 5. These will probably be areas which you consider to be very necessary and in which your level is not very good.

When you have worked out and numbered your priority areas, try to calculate the amount of time you have available for self-directed language learning during the next month or so, and divide it in an appropriate way between the learning activities you have decided to concentrate on.

At this stage you will probably find it useful to discuss your learning programme with a tutor or helper. He or she will give you a record sheet to enter in the work that you do, and will be able to advise you about suitable books, courses or other learning materials.

Activity	How necessary is it?	What is your present level?	Priority	Time available
1. LISTENING				
1.1 Conversational style (social English)				
1.2 Accent and dialect				
1.3 Formal style (e.g. lectures)				
1.4 Technical language				
1.5 Note taking				
2. SPEAKING				
2.1 Conversational style (social English)				
2.2 Formal style (e.g. academic discussion)				
2.3 Pronunciation:	/	/	/	/
2.3.1 Individual sounds				
2.3.2 Word stress, rhythm and intonation				
3. READING				
3.1 Developing vocabulary				
3.2 Increasing speed				
3.3 Improving your reading strategies				
3.4 Note taking from reading				
4. WRITING				
4.1 Informal style (e.g. letters to friends)				
4.2 Formal style (e.g. dissertations and reports, business letters)				
4.3 Technical writing				
4.4 Accuracy (especially grammar)				
4.5 Punctuation				
Total time available:				

Peer Evaluation in Practice

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Abstract

This paper summarizes our trial use of a peer evaluation questionnaire at the Institute for Applied Language Studies. It sets out the background to the trial and emphasizes the role of peer evaluation as a supplement to — and not a replacement for — other forms of self-assessment and tutor assessment. The paper includes comments from Selmous Conference participants and illustrates how these have been incorporated into a revised questionnaire used in our 1987 pre-sessional course — in itself an example of peer evaluation in practice.

Background

Peer evaluation has been used on an experimental basis in one component of the Institute's pre-sessional EAP summer programme, namely the 'speaking skills' sessions in the final four-week block of an overall thirteen-week programme. It should be stressed that this is not the only form of assessment applied in the course. Over the thirteen weeks the students' progress is measured in a number of ways. Formal tutor-based assessment takes the form of regular written assignments and listening tests at three-weekly intervals, and of a cloze reading test at the start, middle and end of the course. Informal self-assessment operates through the use of questionnaires to encourage students to establish their own language learning priorities and to judge their success in remedying their perceived weaknesses.

Speaking skills

This component develops over the thirteen weeks in the following way:

	<i>Weeks 1-6</i>	<i>Weeks 7-9</i>	<i>Weeks 10-13</i>
<i>activities</i>	communication tasks information gathering discussions	discussions/ seminars	presentations
<i>grouping</i>	pairs/small groups	small groups	individual to whole class

In the final four-week block, the presentation sessions are 45 minutes long, broken down into three 15-minute segments:

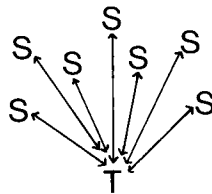
- (1) the individual student's presentation, on a topic of their choice (invariably in their specialist field);
- (2) a question-and-answer session in which the audience can raise points for clarification or discussion;
- (3) feedback from the tutor to both presenter and questioners, based on written notes taken during the previous 30 minutes.

In addition there is peer assessment, involving anonymous completion of a questionnaire-type form by members of the audience. Originally, this was distributed to students after each session, for them to fill in either on the spot, if time allowed, or at home that evening, for return to the speaker the next day.

Reasons for using peer evaluation

Our decision to use peer evaluation for this type of oral presentation is based on four main reasons.

Firstly, it fits in with a principle that underlies the rest of the EAP programme: that we should stress the value of communication between and among students, as opposed to allowing tutor-student (T-S) interaction to become or remain the dominant mode. It is all too easy for language learners — especially those (like many of our EAP students) with long experience of conventional, teacher-fronted language classes — to assume that the model of T-S or S-T interaction they are used to is the only one possible. Such interaction can be represented in this way:



In that model, each student regards their individual exchanges with the teacher as the meaningful parts of the lesson. More importantly, when they fail to understand a fellow-student, they tend to look to the teacher (literally) as a matter of course, for a 'translation' of what the other person has said. So an important principle of our overall approach is that students should be encouraged to negotiate meaning for themselves, rather than relying on intervention from their teacher. In this light, peer evaluation can be seen as one form of S-S interaction.

Secondly, most of our students go on to university courses where a significant number of their fellows will also be non-native users of English. In fact, on some postgraduate courses at Edinburgh, such as those in seed technology or tropical veterinary studies, native students are a tiny minority. Given this future context of use, it is clearly important that the students get used to the necessity to understand — and be understood by — other non-native speakers.

Thirdly, the specific language mode in question — that of face-to-face speaking — demands an immediate sensitivity to the interlocutor(s), to a degree that sets oral presentation apart from, say, academic writing. Ideally, the students should not only be clear speakers (in terms of both form and content) but should also monitor and deal with any on-line comprehension difficulties that their listeners are experiencing. So it is useful for them to get feedback on exactly how much of what they have said has actually been comprehensible to the members of their audience.

Finally and crucially, there is the major inherent problem of oral assessment; judgement is ultimately subjective. We have no way of achieving objective measures of, for example, a speaker's accent or clarity (although cf., the work of Gillian Brown and her associates in the assessment of some elements in communicative success in quantitative terms — Brown and Yule 1983; Brown, Anderson, Shillcock and Yule 1984). Our argument would be that, since audience judgements — *including those of the language tutor* — are inevitably individual and subjective, it makes sense to get as wide a sample of opinion as possible by asking every listener to produce an evaluation, rather than relying on one.

For all these reasons, we took a decision to experiment with the use of a peer evaluation questionnaire, originally designed by my colleagues Gibson Ferguson and Charlyn Wessels, which is reproduced on the following page.

*Confidential Questionnaire on Individual Presentations
(Leading a Seminar)*

(Mark the spaces with an X, where appropriate)

1. Could you follow the main points of the talk?
Yes With difficulty No
2. Would you be able to re-tell the talk to someone else?
Yes No
3. Did the speaker organize his/her talk into clear sections or points?
Yes Not always No
4. Did the speaker signal clearly whenever he/she wanted to introduce a new point?
Yes Not always No
5. Did the speaker use any aids to make the talk clearer? (e.g. writing on the blackboard, showing pictures or diagrams, etc.)
Yes No
6. Was the loudness appropriate?
All right Not loud enough Too loud
7. Was the speed of delivery appropriate?
All right Too fast Too slow
8. Was the amount of information appropriate?
All right Too little Too much
9. Did the speaker interact with the audience?
Yes Not always No
10. What were your main difficulties in following the talk?
None Poor organisation
Speed Pronunciation
Grammar Loudness
Failure to signal when a new point was being introduced
11. Any further comments:
.....
.....
.....

Training sessions

Common experience with administering questionnaires suggested that it would be necessary to provide some form of initial training. To this end, we used a videotaped presentation by an Indonesian student on a previous EAP course as the input to a training session for students and tutors in the completion of the peer evaluation questionnaire. The student's talk had been on 'Food Science and Technology', which is suitably remote from the audience's own areas of expertise to allow us to treat them all as non-specialist listeners.

A number of interesting points came out of my analysis of listeners'/viewers' questionnaire responses to the Indonesian speaker's presentation shown at the training session on our 1986 summer course.

Firstly, it indicated the ambiguity of even apparently factual questions like number 5: some listeners assumed it meant *how well*, rather than *whether* the speaker had used any visual aids.

Secondly, it showed the range of reaction on any one issue: for example, on the question of the speed of delivery, the students' responses were split into ten 'alright', three 'too fast' and four 'too slow'.

Thirdly, the three tutors' evaluations were strikingly different on some points. Of the ten closed questions, they agreed on only one — number 6. In all other cases, they were divided 2:1, or even 1:1:1. This would suggest that there is indeed a strong case for *not* leaving it up to the language tutor to deliver the sole 'verdict' on a particular speaker's presentation.

Comments on the approach

Selmous colleagues at the 1987 Conference made a number of very useful comments and I will summarize them here.

1. Some felt that the cumulative impression of the questionnaire points was perhaps over-critical and negative. Leaving the final question as an invitation to further comment runs the risk that the students (and tutor) will be led to say what was *wrong* with the presentation, rather than offering positive recommendations. I had myself suggested it might be rephrased as 'What advice would you give the speaker for future presentations?'
2. A number of people with experience of teacher-training pointed out that it was standard practice in micro-teaching — which they compared with this form of peer evaluation — (a) to allow the trainee/speaker first chance to say what they felt could have gone better in their performance, and (b) to require the peer assessors to begin their evaluation with a comment on the *strengths* of the performance. The effect of both these changes might be to emphasize the constructive side of criticism.

3. A further point raised in the discussion was the question of the timing of the completion of the questionnaires. If students fill them in after the session — due to lack of time in class — then they may well reflect (consciously or not) the comments made by the tutor in the final ‘feedback’ third of the session. It might be better to have them complete the form immediately after the question-and-answer session. (Peter Grundy has pointed out since that this might take place while the tutor provides one-to-one comments to the presenter.)

Follow-up

As a result of the various comments summarized in the previous section, I made a number of amendments to the material and method of peer evaluation for our summer 1987 pre-session programme. At the time of writing, this course is still in progress, but initial responses from tutors and students suggest that the changes have helped to increase participants’ positive perception of this form of assessment. (The revised version of the evaluation questionnaire is included as an appendix.)

Conclusion

Our experience of trying out this form of evaluation makes us want to persevere with it. We believe it has a marked effect on the extent to which speakers’ take their audience into account. The simple finding from the 1986 training session, that tutors can differ widely in their response to and assessment of the same oral presentation, suggests that we *need* to experiment with peer-based evaluation such as this to complement conventional tutor- and self-based assessment.

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Appendix

Seminar Evaluation Sheet

(Please complete this sheet by *filling in* the spaces or by *circling* the items.)

1. What do you think were the strengths of the presentation?

2. Were you able to follow the main points?
YES WITH DIFFICULTY NO
3. Would you be able to summarise the talk for someone else?
YES WITH DIFFICULTY NO
4. Was the presentation well organized?
YES GENERALLY NO
5. Did the speaker show clearly when they were moving to a new point?
YES GENERALLY NO
6. Did they make good use of visual support (e.g. hand-outs, black-board, overhead projector) to make their points clearer?
YES NOT ALWAYS NO
7. Was their speed of speaking appropriate?
YES TOO FAST TOO SLOW
8. Was the loudness appropriate?
YES NOT LOUD ENOUGH TOO LOUD
9. Did they give sufficient explanation of technical vocabulary?
YES NOT ALWAYS NO
10. Was the amount of information appropriate?
YES TOO LITTLE TOO MUCH
11. How would you judge the speaker's eye-contact with the listeners?
GOOD UNEQUAL INSUFFICIENT
12. If you had serious difficulties in following the talk, were they any of the following?

speed of speaking	poor organization
accent	grammar
loudness	poor signalling of new points

 Mention any other problems here:

13. What advice would you give the speaker for future seminar presentations?

Attitudinal Changes to Self-access in ESP

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Abstract

The paper reports on a study into the use of tutored self-access time within a long-term intensive taught course of EAP/ESP. Attitude scales were used to assess students' reaction to the system and the paper discusses the relative merits of the scales administered and the value of such scales in general. As the course proceeded, the students' positive attitude to the systems' diminished, and this change is related to student needs and the course structure at different stages.

Introduction

The situation I am concerned with is ESP/EAP for students on a course in Britain where the aim is to enable students to progress from a near beginner level to that of studying through the medium of English. The students arrive early in the academic year and stay until June or July, following a taught course for some twenty-five hours a week. They are all graduates who have been selected by their government for Master's level research. During the later stages of the course, when they have already acquired the basic language and skills which enable them to tackle their own subject material at a suitable level, each student prepares a project (Bloor and St John, 1985). They build on both their language and subject knowledge and capitalize on the opportunity for independent, individual study.

This particular type of work cannot be undertaken in the early stages of the course, so alternative means of introducing choice and individualization were sought. Within the class sessions, individualization and self-pacing are quite possible, particularly with task-based material, but the element of choice is restricted; thus it seemed desirable to try other approaches as well. One possibility was for them to regularly choose what aspects of the language they wanted to work on, and self-access was seen as one means of achieving this. By self-access is meant a resource system with varied material from which each student makes their own selection which they work on at their own pace. In addition, it was decided to give

students the opportunity to learn and use word processing so that they could write their own work on disk and keep revising it as their language improved i.e. to provide for individualization within some of the writing sessions (St John, 1987).

Formal evaluation was a key aspect of the study and will be discussed after the self-access system has been described.

The self-access system

A self-access system is potentially available for students to use at any time i.e. use of it might be within scheduled class time or in the students' own time or both. Tutored self-access was set up within class time, but students were free to use the material at other times both on and off the premises, according to the nature of the material.

Self-access means having a range of material available, with the choice the ultimate responsibility of the student. Thus the participants' roles can be summarized as follows:

1. The teachers' role: to organize the material and access to it; to provide answer sheets; to provide guidance, explanations, help at the students' request.
2. The students' role: to select suitable activities according to their own needs; to carry out the activities; to record and evaluate; to consult or suggest.

For setting up a system of self instruction, Leslie Dickinson (1979) suggests that there are four particular factors to be considered:

(a) *Preparation of teachers.*

(b) *Preparation of learner.* The first weeks of the study were devoted to this and students were introduced to the range of activity types and given help in mastering the available hardware, i.e. language laboratory and microcomputers.

(c) *Assessment of material.* The material placed in the resource system is in part a function of what is available, and in part a function of what is seen to be useful. If some prior selection is not made, then we run the risk of 'overload' i.e. of there being so many types of activity that students spend the majority of the time trying each and deliberating over what to do, thus having relatively little time for the activity itself. Interestingly, this seemed to be more of a problem for the ablest students, who complained of wasting time choosing what to do. The weaker students appeared to be conscious of the areas they needed most practice in, and wished to concentrate on. The students' role in evaluating and choosing is important and this is an area where a tutor is valuable.

(d) *Administrative considerations.* The constraints which operated were those of location. A language laboratory and a computer laboratory were available as well as the classroom. Unfortunately, three floors separated

these which meant that time was lost in moving from one venue to another and material could not be stored centrally.

Evaluation

Attitude testing

Much research into attitude testing generates from the field of market research, where customer preferences and attitudes are constantly monitored. There are five operational approaches to determining attitudes (Tull and Hawkins 1976) of which two were applicable to this study:

- (a) inferences from self reports
- (b) inferences from overt behaviour

Student Records

Making inferences from student behaviour is something which all teachers are constantly, if not consciously, doing to greater or lesser degrees. This is important, but for an operational approach systematicity is required and the overt behaviour referred to here is that exhibited from and by the keeping of record books. Each student was given an exercise book and asked to fill in the following tabulated information:

Date	Time spent	Activity	Comment
------	------------	----------	---------

The day and time were required so that some assessment could be made of student attitude from their involvement with the scheme and their working habits e.g. whether they jumped from one activity to another or kept working in the same area for some time. From the activity column, I hoped to ascertain what areas students gave most attention to and to see if this correlated with the information from the attitude scales (see the next section). The comment column was the largest and was their opportunity to write on the difficulty, interest, value etc. and to note particular problems. These comments provided useful immediate feedback for some of the class sessions as well as providing longer term evaluation data.

Attitude scales

For self reports there are a number of different scaling techniques and one purpose of this study was to begin to evaluate the pros and cons of them in relation to attitude testing of learners operating in a foreign or second language.

The scaling techniques used in the study were:

- (a) Balanced non-comparative rating scale
- (b) Paired comparisons
- (c) Likert scale
- (d) Adjective checklist

Rating scales

The use of a rating scale requires the respondent to place the item under consideration along some point of a numerically ordered continuum. The categories at each end of the continuum are labelled; those along the scale may also be labelled but were not in this case. At least five categories should be used and more if the focus is on individual behaviour. As this study was concerned with broad views, just five were used and the results interpreted at three levels: positive, neutral and negative. The neutral point was at the centre of the scale: thus it was a balanced one; it is not necessary to use balanced scales, but it seemed appropriate in this study. The scale was non-comparative because the respondent was not provided with a standard to use in assigning the rating; she/he uses her/his own standard. This type of scale is flexible and easy to repond to; it can, however, only offer fairly broad distinctions.

	a lot				nothing
i.e. Using the vocabulary workcards I learned	5	4	3	2	1

Paired comparisons

Paired comparisons are useful for ranking a small number of items. However, as all possible pairs must be used, the number of items which can satisfactorily be ranked is limited. For n items $[(n)(n-1)/2]$ pairs are necessary; thus six items require fifteen pairs, seven items twenty-one pairs etc. For each pair, the respondent is asked to circle one of the two items according to the criteria given. Because of the restriction on the number of items which can be ranked in this way, broad terms for the activities had to be used such as: pronunciation, listening etc.

e.g. for each pair, circle the item which you preferred:

- Reading/Pronunciation
- Listening/Reading
- Pronunciation/Listening etc.

Likert scale

The Likert scale is another easy scale to administer, making it popular. Respondents indicate their attitude by checking how strongly they agree or disagree with statements that range from very positive to very negative towards the attitudinal object. Again five categories are usually used:

Strongly agree, agree, neutral/neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree.

The statements have to be carefully thought out and the language carefully considered because of both differential mastery and the diversity of language conventions (Robinson, 1984). This is clearly even more crucial when we know that the respondents are learners of the language used in the statements. For instance, discrepancies between responses

to differently worded but semantically similar statements were found particularly where a negative was involved.

	strongly agree	neutral
e.g. I wanted more than two hours a week	8	1
Two hours a week was not enough	5	4

The increase in those using the neutral column may reflect an uncertainty with the meaning of the second statement. (The two statements were not adjacent to each other in the actual scale administered.)

Adjective Checklist

In using an adjective checklist, respondents are presented with a list of words or phrases corresponding to various attitudes and asked simply to circle those which reflect their view. Such a list is very suitable for use with language learners, as it is possible to ensure that all the words and phrases used are familiar to the students by introducing them in the classroom in advance, which reduces the error contingent with misunderstanding of language items.

Results from the attitude scales

The attitude scales were administered at the end of the study and reflect students' views of the system at that time, but do not provide reasons for those views. There were twelve students who completed the scales. On the adjective checklist, three quarters of the students circled words such as *useful*, *interesting*, *valuable* to describe their attitude to the class self-access time, but a quarter considered it a waste of time and boring. Those who were negative to the system were also negative to the actual attitude assessment and only completed some sections usefully. For instance, in the rating scale sections related to the activities undertaken, two respondents drew a line down the negative responses for all the activities, even though their record books showed that they had not actually worked on all of them. Their responses to the paired comparisons were also not valid as they tended to circle everything or nothing. Thus the results for these two attitude scales exclude the two most negative respondents. It should also be noted that, as not all students completed each individual item in the various scales the total number of responses to, for example, the Likert statements is sometimes different.

A broad view of the system was also obtained from questions on the rating scale and, for the various activity types, reflects the fact that the majority were interested e.g. on the rating scale the overall interest level for the various activities was as follows:

very interesting	_____				boring
17	17	15	2		4

Although three quarters of the group expressed interest in the system, there was some ambivalence as to its role and value. This is indicated in the responses to a variety of points. On the same rating scale as that above, for interest, the responses to the amount learnt were much less positive.

Total responses to items on a rating scale concerned with the amount students felt they had learnt from various activities:

a lot	_____			nothing
6	5	31	21	4

Most students felt that they learnt more in taught sessions, yet at the same time said it was good to choose their own material and that they would like more time for it.

Responses to statements on the Likert scale:

	agree	neutral	disagree
Classwork is better	6	5	1
I learn more in a taught class	9	2	1
I learnt a lot working by myself	4	3	5
It was good to choose my own material	8	3	1
I wanted more than two hours a week	8	1	2
A good opportunity for individual attention	6	4	0

This ambivalence and the negative feelings of a few will be discussed later.

As well as ascertaining overall reactions to such a system, the study also sought to determine whether particular types of activity were more popular than others. For this reason, students were asked to rank order the activity types. In the paired comparisons, over half the respondents produced results which were one hundred per cent consistent in the ranking of the six items. Just under a quarter were inconsistent in one pairing and just under a quarter had two inconsistent pairings. (An inconsistent pairing is where the choice circled does not fit in with the ranking given to that item by all the other pairings.) The two activities which featured in the top three ranked positions for 75 per cent of choices were grammar and pronunciation. Computer based exercises and reading material were rated in the bottom three rankings by 75 per cent; listening and vocabulary were evenly spread, between the top and bottom. See Table 1.

Table 1

	gram	pron	listen	read	computer	vocab
i.e. percentage of times in one of top three positions	75	75	50	25	25	50
percentage of times in one of bottom three positions	25	25	50	75	75	50

On the Likert scale, a number of statements were directed to determining whether the initial assumption that the system should be tutored were valid.

i.e.	agree		disagree
It was important to have a teacher there	8	1	3
I did not need the teacher there	3	1	8

(Here there is consistency between the positive and negative wording.)

But even those who did not feel that a teacher was necessary found the teacher useful:

	agree		disagree
I found the teacher useful	10	1	0

If a teacher is to be there, then the sessions have to be a part of the scheduled timetable, but this was a factor which not everyone had grasped, as the results to three other statements show:

	agree		disagree
Self-access should be done after classes	5	2	5
The time should not have come from the regular classes	5	4	1
Self-access should be additional to the regular classes	4	4	3

(Again the use of the negative statement introduces an increase in the number of neutral responses.)

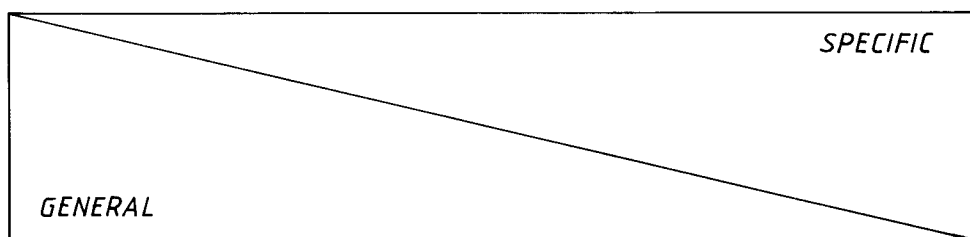
The importance of a systematic approach to attitude assessment was quite accidentally highlighted at the end of this study. After the students had completed the attitude scales, we talked generally about the course and how the next term might develop. During the discussion, several students made it very clear that they now had negative views of self-access. They had in fact, unknown by me, had a meeting the day before to discuss the course and the impression they had conveyed was that one of the areas of major dissatisfaction was the self-access programme. Others

disagreed with them but, as is perhaps usual, the negative feelings were more vociferously expressed than the positive ones and the overall impression gained was distinctly negative. I thus expected the analysis of the data to be largely unfavourable. As the results show, that was the view of a minority, and the majority had more positive if somewhat ambivalent views which would otherwise have been ignored and overruled.

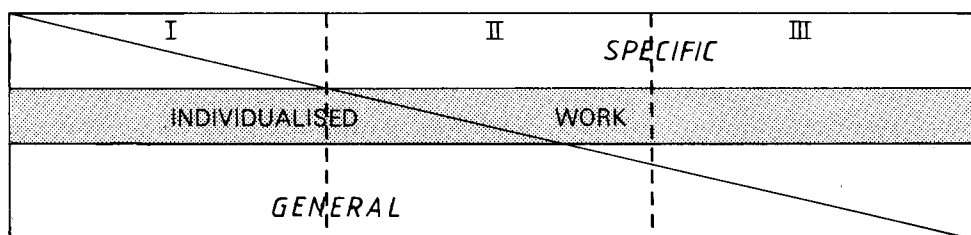
Significance of the findings

When students first arrive in Britain their most pressing need is to be able to communicate. As this is gradually achieved, more focus on the study aspects can be introduced. I thus see the broad course outline as being composed of two main aspects: the specific language and skills for studying, and the more general language and background for living in Britain. Rather than these two running in parallel, I believe they should dovetail and as one gains in prominence so the other decreases.

e.g.



If we consider individualized work as running throughout the course, then the following picture emerges:



I think that the representation is a useful one and helps to explain some of the results of this study and set some limits to the value of a self-access system of this kind in an ESP course of this nature.

When the study was initiated, the students were enthusiastic, as was observable from their behaviour as exemplified by the records they kept. When requested, these were handed in promptly by all the students, although the degree of detail in the information differed. Some students

took the opportunity to write fully about the activities carried out in the class time and even wrote about non-class activities. Some also used it as an opportunity to mention particular learning problems they were having. Others restricted themselves to comments such as: 'some words are difficult but I can understand the general meaning', 'very boring but I learnt a lot'.

During the last weeks of the study, the number of entries dropped as, in some cases, did the length and informative value of entries e.g. 'easy to understand', 'sometimes difficult to understand'. The final request to check the record books produced only half of them. I see the difference in initial and final attitudes as part reason for the ambivalence illustrated by the attitude scales i.e. students had mixed reactions because their initial and final ones were not identical. This may be explained by their progression through the course and their changing needs. As illustrated in the diagram (p.133) the emphasis changes from general to subject-based work and that needs to be reflected in their individualized work. During the first term, students attend only English classes and most of the material used is not directly from their field. During the second term, students start to attend some subject lectures and to read more in their own field. They are involved with applications to Universities and have to write research proposals. They have adapted to living and studying in Britain and are increasingly concerned with using language for their own study purposes. Their need for, use of, and attitude to the language are dynamic not static.

In contrast, I would suggest that, in those terms a pre-prepared self-access system of the kind described here is static and cannot allow adequately for the changing needs and interests of the students. Its value has a limit. That it serves the purpose initially of giving students a choice that they desire and make use of is shown by the paired comparisons. No two students placed the activities in the same order of preference; in fact no more than two students had the same combination of the top two, indicating that providing a choice is important. However, as the second term progressed, the value of the system clearly diminished particularly for the better students. Among those most negative at the end were a couple of the best students, which initially surprised me because I expected that the faster students would appreciate working at their own pace on their own choice of material. In class-based activities, they frequently have to wait for the slower ones of the group, which can be frustrating.

However, as the second term progresses the diagram indicates that these students are increasingly not in fact offered a choice, because their needs and interests have moved beyond the bounds of what this system can offer them. This is exacerbated because the better students can be expected to be capable of operating further to the right at any particular stage than the weaker ones. To provide a range of activities at different levels in each students' particular subject area is not time-effective, as well as being beyond the ability of most of us.

Conclusions

This study has highlighted two aspects for me: one is the importance of using formal and systematic means for evaluating attitudes, rather than relying merely on discussions. The attitude scales which are simplest to construct for language learners are the adjective checklist and the paired comparisons, but they reveal a restricted range of information. The Likert scale reveals valuable information, but great care is needed in the construction of statements, and the margin for language induced error is greater. Secondly, I believe the value of a self-access system with pre-prepared materials is limited within an intensive ESP course to the early stages of that course. Once students are capable of operating to some degree in the L2 then, for individualized and self-directed work, they need and want to work on material directly relevant to their subject area. This cannot be achieved by a pre-prepared system, but only through each student.

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One-to-one Supervision of Students Writing MSc or PhD Theses

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This paper will address the problem of the language tutor helping overseas students in British universities who are writing MA/MSc or PhD theses. It will argue that, as well as assisting students with lexical, grammatical and stylistic features of their writing, the language tutor may have a role in helping the students learn something of the 'culture' of their discipline, or at least the expectations of their supervisor with regard to selection and arrangement of material.

Firstly a brief description of the nature of one-to-one supervision offered by the English for Overseas Students Unit (EOSU) at Birmingham is required. Students normally attend a weekly 30-45 minute session in which a short section of their theses, say 2-10 pages, is read by the language tutor and corrections made and explained to the student. The number of students that can receive such supervision is clearly limited, and it is offered only to those who are prepared to attend regularly. Many of the students coming for supervision are referred by their supervisor, others take the initiative themselves.

Tutors in EOSU are not, however, prepared to undertake the task of correcting a thesis or an essay that has already been written in full unless the student is prepared to attend tutorials over an appropriate period of time. What is offered is a 'teaching' rather than a 'correction' service.

The pattern of the supervision is thus very similar to that described by James (1984) in his case study of a Brazilian student writing a PhD thesis on the sociology of medicine. As a result of the language supervisions he gave this Brazilian student, James identified three categories of error:

1. Mistakes leading to breakdown in memory
 - 1.1 Over-long/over complex sentences
 - 1.2 Faulty referencing
 - 1.3 Lexical difficulties
 - 1.4 Weakness in signposting
2. Mistakes leading to a blurring in meaning
 - 2.1 Inefficient ordering
 - 2.2 Inappropriate weighting

2.3 Functional incoherence

3. Mistakes distracting the reader from the meaning conveyed

3.1 Stylistic acceptability

3.2 Grammatical acceptability

James concludes that 'students need help with what they find most difficult. What they find most difficult can only be discovered by observing them at work on the job'.

James did not consider in any detail the question of the expectations of the subject supervisor about the layout of the thesis, and the organization of the various chapters and sections within each chapter. In practice, in advising overseas students about theses, one frequently wants to know more about these expectations, in areas ranging from lexical choice through to the organization of different sections of chapters. One example will suffice to illustrate this point. James' Brazilian student had written 'disarticulation of the social order'. James wished to change this to 'crumbling of the social order'. The student rejected this, arguing that 'disarticulation' has a precision in sociological texts that 'crumbling' does not. This was confirmed by the subject supervisor.

The research described in this paper sought, in the spirit of James' conclusion, to find out more about these matters, and thereby to discover something of the 'culture' of the department concerned. This was the Plant Biology department whose MSc course in Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources has a very high proportion of overseas students. The co-operation between the department and EOSU is considerable (Johns and Dudley-Evans, 1980) and includes work on the writing of the thesis which reports on the four-month project carried out in the last part of the course.

As part of this work it was decided that an investigation of the changes made by subject supervisors in students' theses would provide a very valuable insight into the supervisor's expectations about the organization of these theses. It was further decided that the investigation should concentrate on the 'discussion of results' section as this had been identified by both students and supervisors as the section that is most difficult to write. What happened was that the first draft of the discussion sections of these submitted by four students was photocopied after the supervisor had made comments, and the photocopy passed to the English tutor. When the final draft had been completed this was also photocopied, and passed to the language tutor, who then made a comparison of the two versions. The hypothesis was that there would be two kinds of change:

1. Changes of content and correction of factual error;
2. Changes in interpretation of the results presented, and in the structure of the argument presented.

The great majority of the changes were of type (2) and the nature of

these changes did, in fact, reveal very interesting features of the expectations of the tutor.

The number of changes made varied considerably between the four theses. One remained substantially unchanged apart from a few changes in wording, another changed so much that the final draft was almost completely different from the first. Discussion with the supervisor revealed that she considered the first draft very poor indeed, in that it presented a tremendous amount of detail about the actual results and the method used but very little comment. The discussion was, in her opinion, little more than an extended results section. The final draft introduced much more comment on the results, and removed much of the unnecessary detail about the results and method.

In the other two theses the changes made as a result of supervisor's comments were many fewer but still of considerable interest, in that the supervisor seems to have encouraged the students to include more of the 'moves' that previous research had indicated to be prevalent in the discussion section of Plant Biology theses (Dudley-Evans, 1986). In an analysis of seven discussion sections of Plant Biology dissertations much influenced by Swales' work on article introductions (Swales, 1981) and Hopkins' work on conference papers in irrigation (Hopkins, 1985), Dudley-Evans (1986) suggests that the following moves are found in the discussion section.

1. Background information

The writer presents information that he/she considers that the reader needs in order to understand the results and the comments on them. It may be information about the aim of the research, the method employed, relevant previous research, or theory.

2. Statement of result

3. (Un)expected outcome

The writer comments on whether the result is expected or not.

4. Reference to previous research (comparison)

The writer compares his/her result(s) with those reported in the literature.

5. Explanation of unsatisfactory (or surprising) result

The writer suggests reasons for an unexpected result or one different from those in the literature.

6. Deduction

The writer makes a claim about the generalizability of a particular result.

7. Hypothesis

The writer makes a more general claim arising from his experimental results.

8. Reference to previous research (support)

9. Recommendation

The writer makes suggestions for future work.

10. Justification

The writer justifies the need for future work recommended.

(Adapted from Hopkins and Dudley-Evans, forthcoming.)

The writer selects appropriate moves from this list to comment on important results. The pattern of moves is usually cyclical, with a statement of result followed by a number of comments on that result. The pattern is as follows:

- Background information — Move 1 (optional)
- Statement of result(s) — Move 2 (obligatory)
- Comments on the result(s) — An appropriate selection from Moves 3-10

It is interesting to note that very frequently the moves making up the comments will come in ascending, numerical order, i.e. a Move 3, if included, will normally precede Move 4.

Analysis of the two theses revealed that the changes suggested by the supervisor were additional comments on the results that fitted the move pattern described above. The 'moves' added were:

Reference to previous research (comparison)	5
Deduction	3
Hypothesis	3
Recommendations	3
Explanation of unsatisfactory result	2

The following are examples of changes made:

1st draft

The characteristic features of orthodox behaviour were exhibited in this storage experiment by Guizotia seeds. The loss of the viability of the seeds at the highest temperature and higher moisture and general decline of the seeds at 10.5% and 25 C and the maintenance of viability by the seeds at -20 C irrespective of the moisture content and those of the lower moisture content irrespective of temperature were in conformity with orthodox behaviour.

2nd draft

The characteristic features of orthodox behaviour were exhibited in this storage experiment by Guizotia seeds. The loss of the viability of the seeds at the highest temperature and higher moisture level, and the gradual decline of the seeds at 10.5% moisture and 25 C, and the maintenance of viability by the seeds at -20 C irrespective of temperature conforms to general expectations.
(underlining in the bottom line added)

Here the supervisor has changed the wording so that it reads much more like Move 3 — the Expected Outcome.

The three-week storage experiment was able to shed some light on the expected longevity of the seed under different storage conditions.

The three-week storage experiment provided fast and efficient data for the calculation viability for the species, which has not been attempted previously, enabling the tentative prediction of the longevity of the seed under different storage conditions.

(underlining added)

Here the writer has added, at the supervisor's suggestion, a comment on the lack of previous research in the area. I would argue that this is a form of Move 4 Reference to previous research (comparison), in which the writer boosts his own result by noting that there is no previous work related to his result. The closeness of this to Swales' Move 3 in article introductions 'Preparing for present research by indicating a gap' will be apparent. (Swales, 1981.)

The result of measurement of electrical conductivity does not appear to aid in distinguishing cultivars or as a measure of viability as far as rice is concerned. Reference to table 2 shows that until the end of the experimental period of 102 days, cultivars V and V at 30 C at the lower moisture level maintained their near 100% viability, while V under similar conditions remained highly viable at 94.7%. Reference to table 9 shows that the electrical conductivity of this particular seed, in all three cultivars increased approximately threefold from day 46 to day 102 of storage. Ghosh et al (1981) . . .

One important finding in the present experiment is that in rice, if electrical conductivity measurements are to be used as a measure of viability, seeds should be soaked without the husk. The data obtained showed that there was no marked drop in viability, over a period of storage, for example at 30 C at the lower moisture level, the electrical conductivity of the soak water increased markedly. These results differ from the work reported by Ghosh et al (1981). These workers found only a very small increase in electrical conductivity, even though the viability dropped by nearly 15%. However they do not mention whether the seeds used for soaking had the husk intact or not. It is also possible that cultivar differences may exist . . .

(underlining added)

At the beginning the writer has completely changed the statement of result making it more positive. At the end the writer has added Move 5, an explanation of the difference between his results and those found by Ghosh et al.

Moreover I believe that the language tutor should be able to use this background knowledge to make tentative suggestions about how students might improve the organization of their discussion sections. It is well accepted that the language tutor supervising students' written work should do more than just correct surface features (Houghton, 1984, Ballard, 1984). Clearly the language tutor is not in a position to do more than make tentative suggestions that the student may wish to think about and consult his/her supervisor about. Nonetheless the language tutor, if he/she has read or carried out relevant research, may be in a position to explain the move structure of different sections of a thesis more effectively than the subject supervisor, who may be less conscious of the patterns, however much he/she uses them, and therefore less qualified to make relevant suggestions. The one-to-one supervision in this situation becomes a kind of 'fortification' exercise in which suggestions are made for possible extension and enrichment of the thesis.

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The Individualization of Pronunciation Improvement

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Rationale

Most teachers can provide anecdotal evidence of confusion caused by their students' pronunciation problems. I recently had the experience of hearing a South Korean student on a 'Masters in Business Administration' course give a very technical and detailed talk on something which, for the first ten minutes I heard as being called 'comfortables'. I knew that I was mishearing but it took me a long time to work out that he was saying 'convertibles' (i.e. convertible shares). Students themselves often recognize their general deficiencies in this area, frequently requesting either more time to be spent on pronunciation teaching or for pronunciation material in the language laboratory to be recommended to them.

Judging from published material, however, most courses in EAP at a tertiary level, give little time and attention to a pronunciation improvement. There are, of course, a number of perfectly valid reasons why this should be so.

1. Time is limited in such courses and the most urgent academic needs of students are often given as the ability to understand lectures, read text books and articles, and write reports and essays. The development of oral seminar skills is a common objective, but teaching often focuses on the strategies that are necessary to organize talks and to participate in seminars, rather than on the details of how phrases and expressions are pronounced.
2. This, of course, reflects a wider trend in language teaching. Focusing on the details of pronunciation may be seen as being incompatible with the desire to encourage oral fluency. Pronunciation problems, it seems to be assumed, will right themselves as a learner's English improves generally.
3. There appears to be a widespread dissatisfaction with the materials and methodology that are often proposed for pronunciation teaching. While a 'communicative approach' to language learning has resulted in the introduction of engaging activities designed to develop oral fluency,

the mainstays of pronunciation teaching are still the techniques of discrimination between close sounds and repetition, very often unrelated to contextual meaning.

4. Although the evidence is inconclusive, pronunciation habits developed in or maintained into adulthood are notoriously difficult to change by formal instruction.

The pronunciation problems of one student in a class may be very different from those of his/her neighbour. Even in a group of students sharing the same first language, from student to student a wide variety of problems with English pronunciation can be identified. This feature, of course, becomes even more noticeable in a multi-lingual class. Traditionally, teachers are often recommended either to draw up a 'syllabus' of potential pronunciation problems, perhaps based on contrastive analysis or simply on intuitions about what foreign learners find difficult about English pronunciation, or they are encouraged to deal with pronunciation problems as they arise in class. These approaches often lead to all students in a group working on one particular aspect of pronunciation, an exercise which at best may be simply irrelevant to the majority of the students and at worst may have a potentially detrimental effect on the English pronunciation of some.

So where does this leave us? On the one hand, there is a demand for pronunciation work from students; for the majority, poor pronunciation can be a handicap to successful communication. On the other hand, pronunciation often has a low priority in teaching English for Academic Purposes and in the more general climate of a 'communicative' approach to teaching spoken English; and there is, I suggest, a dissatisfaction with available materials and recommended methods. It seems clear to me, then, that the most satisfactory solution, or at least attempt at a solution, must be a procedure of identifying the needs of individual students and providing some sort of individualized scheme for improvement.

Evidence

Comments so far about variations in pronunciation problems within even a mono-lingual class have been based only on subjective observation. I wish now to make my argument somewhat more objective by providing evidence from a group of eight Algerian learners studying at Birmingham University before going on to undertake postgraduate research in Physics. All speak Arabic as a mother tongue and French as their second language. I will then outline some of the procedures used with these students in an attempt to individualize their pronunciation improvement.

To gather data on the range of pronunciation variation within the group, the method adopted was to record the eight students as they each told a story using a sequence of pictures as prompts. Before the recording, each student was given five minutes to look at the pictures and read through an accompanying text. The text was then removed and ten minutes later

the recording started. In this way I hoped to control the lexical content to some extent so that a comparison of pronunciations could be made, but avoid the students reading aloud or memorizing large sections of the given text. When the recording started the students were simply asked to tell the story in the pictures in front of them in their own words as far as possible.

The analysis simply involved my picking out from each recording words pronounced in such a way that confusion could result if the 'error' were to be repeated in a less obvious context. The question I posed to myself was 'If I was doing a fairly structured language drill with the students would I stop and correct this pronunciation?' If I considered that I probably would, then I singled it out. This is perhaps best justified with some examples (see Figure 1).

The words listed were those content words used by more than one student where at least one student produced an unacceptable pronunciation. 'Eat', for example, was used in the recordings by all eight students. Seven of them produced an acceptable version while one substituted /æ/ for /i/. I considered this to be unacceptable and likely to cause confusion if repeated in a different context. The word 'cow' was produced unacceptably in different ways by two students, and so on.

Figure 1

Word	Number of students (Total 8)			Unacceptable pronunciation
	Total	Acceptable	Unacceptable	
eat*	8	7	1	/æt/
cow*	8	6	2	1. /kəu:/ 2. /ku:/
breath*	7	6	1	/bri:—/
exploded*	7	4	3	1. /'ekspləuzd/ 2. /'kspləzd/
continued*	6	4	2	'kɒntɪju:d/
breathed*	4	3	1	/breθt/
instead*	4	3	2	/ɪn'sti:d/
day*	4	3	2	/di:—
frightened*	4	2	2	1. /'fraɪnəd/ 2. /'fraɪnet/
finally	3	2	1	/'fɪnəli:/
idea	2	1	1	/aɪdi:/
nothing	2	1	1	/nəʊθɪŋ/

(* denotes words in text)

These results are, of course, taken from a very small corpus of data and I would not wish to read too much into them. I would like to conclude from them only that this sample of the students' language appears to support the contention that individual students have very

different pronunciation problems even when they share the same first (and, here, second) language. If the errors noted were produced in controlled classroom interaction and I decided to correct them, perhaps conducting a choral repetition, then for the majority of the students the process would most probably be irrelevant.

Suggestions

Strategies for individualization have been introduced for diagnosis (i.e. the identification of problems) and remedial work (i.e. correction of these problems).

Attention is focused on two main areas of difficulty: word pronunciation and word stress, although the strategies described below could be used to help improve other phonological features such as modifications made in connected speech and intonation.

1. Word pronunciation

In the area of word pronunciation problems can be identified in relation to:

- (a) Sound-symbol correspondence. Given a particular written form the student may produce an incorrect spoken equivalent although he/she is able to produce the sound in other contexts. So for example, the word *finally* may be said as /fɪnəli:/ although in other contexts the student has no problems producing an /əɪ/ or even /fəɪ/ sound. That is to say, the student doesn't know how to pronounce the word or has forgotten.
- (b) 'Problem sounds'. That is, English sounds that are consistently substituted by a source language sound by a student, either generally or in a limited environment, perhaps only in word initial position.

2. Word stress

In this area concern is with primary stress placement, a frequent source of difficulty, it seems, in technical and semi-technical vocabulary. Attention is also given to shifts of stress in words when used in context. The citation form *loga'rithmic*, for example, is likely to have primary stress on the first syllable in a *'logarithmic 'scale*.

Strategy 1: peer group teaching

The first strategy was intended to be a step towards a greater degree of individualization. It involved diagnosis and correction in *peer groups*. Initially, I selected a short extract from an upper-secondary school physics text book. The students were given the text to take home and were asked simply to read it in preparation for a subsequent exercise. During a language laboratory session on the following day each student was asked to go to a private study booth and read the extract aloud, with the text in front of them, recording it onto cassette. By the end of the session I had one tape on which each of the students had recorded their readings.

Following this I listened to the whole tape, circling on a copy of the text for each student words or parts of words where I decided, using the fairly arbitrary criteria I outlined earlier, there was an error of pronunciation or stress such that a confusion might possibly arise either in this context or if the error was transferred to other contexts. No indication of the nature of the error was given on the paper.

Before our next meeting I arranged the students into three groups. Although all students had made some errors, I tried to ensure that for each word in the text there was at least one person in each group who had produced an acceptable version. This was easily done by quickly looking through the texts I had marked. So, for example, in one group the word *pendulum* was pronounced /'pandjulam/ by one of the students, as /'pen'dju:lam/ by two, and correctly by one. The tape was then edited so that each group was given a new tape containing only the readings of members of that group. So there were four or five readings on each tape.

During the next meeting tapes were distributed to the groups, together with a tape recorder and texts for each member with errors circled. They were then instructed to work through the tape deciding what each pronunciation error was and then making sure that the student who had made a particular error was able to produce an acceptable version. They were also told that at least one member of the group had produced each word correctly and that he/she/they should be used as models. I set a time limit of 30 minutes which proved adequate. Apart from the fact that the students rose to the challenge and found it an enjoyable exercise, the most promising aspect of this was that students who were able to produce acceptable versions were very keen to demonstrate to their colleagues how they were doing it incorrectly and, what is more, were very good at this demonstration. Sharing the same first language seemed to make them very aware of why errors, particularly of pronunciation, were being produced and they were capable of explaining in fairly precise terms, sometimes in English, sometimes in French, how these errors could be corrected.

The main difficulty with this procedure lies in selecting a text which is long enough to throw up a reasonable number of problems, but short enough for the students to be able to analyse the readings in a short period of time.

The acid test, of course, is whether the corrections made during the group work are maintained in the long term. This is a very difficult thing to test. In a fairly rough-and-ready approach to this, the students were asked to repeat their individual recordings of the first two weeks after the group session. The results of this were very encouraging. All the students had fewer errors than before. For most the number was quite drastically reduced.

If we consider evidence from one of the students as an illustration, we can see that many of the errors found in recording 1 had been eliminated in recording 2 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Recording 1 -errors		Recording 2 -errors	
pendulum	/pən'dju:ləm/	oscillator	/ɒ'sileitə/
oscillator	/ɒsi:'jeitə/		
alter	/ɔ:l'tɜ:/		
appreciably	/əpri:ʃi:'eɪbli:/		
oscillation	/ɒsi:'jeɪʃən/		
concern	/'kɒnsɜ:n/	concern	/'kɒnsɜ:n/
compression	/kəm'preɪʃən/	compression	/kəm'preɪʃən/
develops	/'di:veləʊps/		

Strategy 2: a tape exchange scheme

The second strategy individualizes the process still further and reduces the demands on valuable class time.

Essentially the strategy involves each student in recording a reading aloud of a short text (no more than 150 words) taken by the student from his/her subject area. Both the tape and the text are then passed to me. I note any pronunciation problems and suggest various activities as a remedial treatment. The tape then goes back to the student and the cycle is repeated.

The most straightforward remedial action that can be taken is, as in the peer group work described above, to circle words containing errors without indicating what the error is, and then provide a model version on the student's tape. The student then compares his own recording with the model and makes an improved recording.

Other activities, leading from errors noted, have been:

1. To record some traditional sound discrimination and repetition exercises on the student's tape for him/her to work on;
2. To record a list of multi-syllabic words, and ask the student to write them down and mark primary stress;
3. To ask students to note examples of shifting word stress in different sentences that the teacher records — and perhaps to devise some more examples and put them on the tape;
4. To record a list of words and ask the student to group them according to some criterion of pronunciation, for example, whether they contain a particular sound or not;
5. Give a written list of sentences, words or a text for the student to record to act as the next input to the process.

And so on. There are numerous possibilities.

In the early stages the procedure is fairly time-consuming, but as the bank of activity types and specific activities is built up the whole process takes little more than five to ten minutes per student per week. As the

time goes on they have a recorded catalogue of their problems and models and exercises for improvement which they can refer back to if necessary. And all the material is directed to their own needs.

Many of the remedial exercises employed are very traditional, being based on discrimination and repetition. But the way they are used on this individual basis to remedy a particular problem of a particular student at a particular time in his/her learning makes them much more effective than in their use with groups as a whole.

Some final thoughts

The strategies suggested are being used in, perhaps, ideal teaching conditions — with a small group of well-motivated students — and it is readily accepted that in most situations the extent of individualization described here would be impractical. But if it is decided that pronunciation improvement is to figure anywhere in our teaching programmes, then we need to consider how best it can be achieved, and I firmly believe that some degree of individualization represents the most efficient approach we can adopt.

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Tony Dudley-Evans is a lecturer in the English for Overseas Students Unit at the University of Birmingham, having had a number of years' experience in teaching overseas for the British Council. He is co-editor of the well-known *Nucleus* series, in which he has co-authored a number of the individual volumes. *Writing Laboratory Reports* was published by Nelson in 1985. He has written a number of articles on ESP-related themes. His current interests are team-teaching and the devising of genre-specific writing materials for foreign students.

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Alan Tonkyn has taught and trained teachers in the UK, Iran, and Singapore. Since 1983 he has been at the Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Reading, initially as Research Fellow and subsequently as Lecturer. His particular interests include English for Academic Purposes, Language Testing, and English Grammar.

